

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



113 163

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY















SHAKE HANDS  
WITH  
THE DRAGON



CARL GLICK

---

SHAKE HANDS  
WITH  
THE DRAGON

*Illustrated by Donald McKay*

---

New York WHITTLESEY HOUSE London  
MCGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY, INC.

## **SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON**

*Copyright, 1941, by the McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.*

All rights reserved. This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without permission of the publishers.

First printing, August, 1941  
Second printing, August, 1941  
Third printing, September, 1941

**PUBLISHED BY WHITTLESEY HOUSE**  
A Division of the McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.

*Printed in the United States of America*  
*by Quinn & Boden Company, Inc., Rahway, N. J.*

FOR  
SUE ANN  
WHO USES CHOPSTICKS TOO

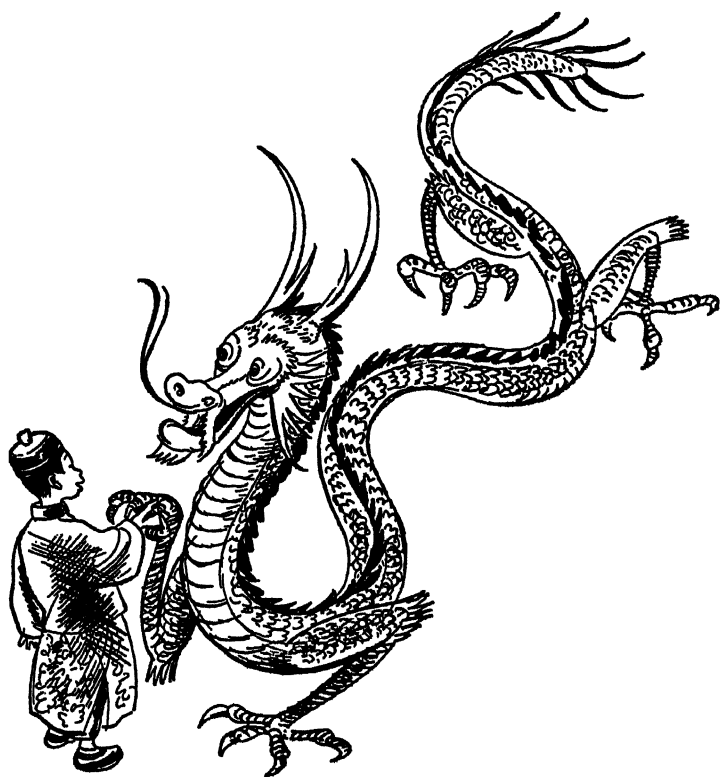




## CONTENTS

---

1. WEST MEETS EAST	1
2. A FOOTBALL FOR THE BABY	17
3. HOT POTATOES	34
4. NUMBER ONE BAD BOY	47
5. GRANDMA IS BOSS	62
6. BEHIND CLOSED DOORS	81
7. BABY'S FIRST HAIRCUT	93
8. A SCHOLAR LIKE MY FATHER	101
9. PROFESSIONAL MATCHMAKER	120
10. THE TALES THE OLD MEN TELL	142
11. THEY EAT SEAWEED	157
12. DRINKS ON THE HOUSE	176
13. SAY IT IN VERSE	194
14. TURN THE OTHER EAR	206
15. THE DRAGON DANCES	219
16. YEAR OF THE MONKEY	229
17. NO UNIONS—NO STRIKES	246
18. POETIC GUNMEN	259
19. CALL FOR AND DELIVER	268
20. AN EMPRESS IN A LAUNDRY	282
21. THE PITH OF THE BAMBOO	300
22. MR. WU ASCENDS THE DRAGON	313
INDEX	323



## WEST MEETS EAST

.....

IT WAS over nine years ago that I first became acquainted with the Chinese in this country. They have become my favorite people. I like them for many things, not the least of which is their roguish, insatiable sense of humor.

To an American the Chinese often seem strange, their ways often surprising. When they want to cook a duck, they blow it up first with a bicycle pump. When a Chinese child is naughty, it's the father who takes the blame. When they have a funeral, they give everyone attending a piece of candy and a bit of money wrapped in white paper, and then invite them to a banquet.

I often ask myself, "Do I understand the Chinese?" For on the day when I think I really know them, and this—or that—is the answer, they do something to upset completely all my pet theories and all my preconceived notions. And I have to start all over again.

Maybe it's just as well. For knowing the Chinese has been—to me—an exciting adventure; one that opens new paths to explore, new beauties in living to discover, and new horizons beyond which lies—who knows what?

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

Some years ago I was writing an article about crime among the Chinese in this country. I spent a lot of time trotting from one society for the prevention of crime to another seeking information. I made inquiries at police headquarters in New York. I even wrote to the Federal Bureau of Investigation at Washington for their *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States*. I gathered a lot of facts, and they were truly amazing.

I probed beneath the surface and discovered, from police records, that there is so little known crime among the Chinese that as a race they present no acute problems to our officers of the law. But I wanted an interpretation of these facts and the reason for this low crime ratio.

So I telephoned one of my Chinese friends. "Is it true—" I said, and asked what I wanted to know.

For a moment he was silent. Then he replied, mysteriously, "I can't answer your questions over the telephone. Come and see me tonight after ten o'clock."

So that evening I went to Chinatown alone. As I turned off Canal Street I entered another world. Silent, brooding, incomprehensible Chinatown lay before me. The streets even at this hour were practically deserted. One lone Chinese, an old man, sat in the doorway of his shop, gently fanning himself. In a window hung a row of freshly roasted ducks, their fat sides dripping grease into a pan. In the back of one of the stores I saw the proprietor and the clerks having their *shew yeh*, or midnight supper, their heads bent over their rice bowls and their chopsticks fluttering busily. High above the street, lights shone brightly in the balcony

of the tong headquarters. And far off in the distance I heard the rumble of the elevated train.

I climbed four flights of stairs in an apartment building and then walked along a dimly lighted hall. From behind closed doors I heard the muffled squeak of a stringed instrument playing a wheezy, oriental melody. Strange odors lingered in the hallway, those faint, tantalizing smells peculiar only to Chinatown. Then I stood before a door painted a bright red. On it in black were some Chinese characters, my friend's name. I rapped. After a long moment, the door opened and there stood my friend, smiling from ear to ear.

"Come in," he said softly.

I slipped quietly in. He closed the door noiselessly behind me. His family was seated about in the living room, the mother sewing, the father reading an old manuscript. First my friend offered me a cup of tea—the cup of hospitality. I accepted it as he handed it to me, with both hands. This, as I had learned from previous experience, was correct. I paid my respects to his parents and tried a feeble joke or two with his younger brothers and sisters.

Then he led me into an inner room and closed and locked the door. He even pulled tight the transom. We were quite alone. He drew a chair up close to mine.

"Now," he whispered. "What is it you want to know?"

I whispered back my reply. I told him I was writing an article about crime.

"Will it be published?" he whispered.

"Yes," I whispered back, "in a national magazine with some three million circulation."

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"What is it you want to know?" he asked.

I asked my questions in a hushed voice. He whispered the answers. Then I rose and we solemnly shook hands.

"Now," he said, "after an evening's hard work, let's go to a late movie."

So off we went, talking as we walked along about other things, the weather, bits of gossip about our friends, news of the day.

Finally, in course of time, the article appeared. My friend came to see me, a copy of the published article in his hand.

"This is a surprise," he said. Then with a puzzled air he asked, "But where did you learn all these things about the Chinese? How did you find them out? Who told you?"

I, too, looked mysterious. "I've promised not to tell," I said.

He beamed with pleasure.

"Amazing! Amazing!" he murmured. "I don't see how you did it."

That's the Chinese. Above all else, they love a secret. And this love of keeping things to themselves has made them appear to the casual observer a strange, retiring, alien people. It's one reason why so comparatively little is known about the real truth of what goes on behind the scenes in Chinatown, and also why they are so often misunderstood and misinterpreted.

The Chinese are not an easy people to get to know. They do not wear their hearts on their sleeves. And they do not give their complete confidence to anybody

until they are quite certain that that confidence will not be abused.

As one of their philosophers has said, "You do not know what is in a stranger's heart by looking at his face."

Then there were the exclusion laws passed by Congress back in 1882—suspending immigration of the Chinese to this country. That was not an easy pill for the proud Chinese to swallow. And the old men still remember the tales told by their fathers of the race riots and the persecutions in California in the 1880's. The memories of those indignities in a country where all men were supposed to be free and equal have not been forgotten. And so, like father, like son, they, too, have withdrawn unto themselves and have remained silent and aloof in the midst of our American life.

Then, also, they have an inherent modesty that prevents them from shouting from the roof tops a summary of their virtues. Secure in their own philosophy, self-sufficient even in a foreign country, they rarely say a word in their own defense.

On first acquaintance they may seem a solemn, plodding people—like your Chinese laundryman, for instance, who merely grunts and shrugs his shoulders—but scratch the surface and you will find the Chinese possessed of a sense of humor that finds amusement in all things, both big and little. They derive much pleasure from appearing to act with great stupidity. It's only the genuine humorist who really sees the joke in keeping a secret. Like my friend Bo-Gum, for example.

In Canton, China, where he attended Lingnan Uni-



versity, Bo-Gum was the champion swimmer. But he never boasted, and when he came back to this country, he kept the memory of his prowess a profound secret. Then one day he went to a swimming pool. He hesitated on the edge of the pool and looked about him with an air of dismay.

The swimming instructor on hand, new to the job and a conceited young fellow, arrogant and self-assured, immediately asked Bo-Gum if he could swim.

And patronizingly he put his question in pidgin English, "You likee swimmy?"

Now Bo-Gum was born in this country, attended one of our universities, and speaks English as well as any American college graduate. However, in reply to this question he said politely in pidgin English, "Maybe. Some. You teach me, maybe?"

"Sure," said the swimming instructor, confidently. "Can you dive?"

"What you mean—dive?" asked Bo-Gum, with a blank, almost unintelligent look on his face.

"Watch me!" cried the instructor.

Then he ran from the diving board, took a headlong plunge into the pool, and, hitting the water like a ton of lead, so disturbed the tranquil surface of the pool that little waves rippled the entire length. He came up, sputtering for air, pulled himself out of the pool, and said to the silently observing Bo-Gum, "There! That's what we call in this country—a dive!"

"I do—like that—maybe?" asked Bo-Gum innocently. "You teach me—dive—that way?"

"Sure," responded the swimming instructor. "Try it. It's easy."

Without another word Bo-Gum walked cautiously to the end of the diving board and stood there teetering back and forth.

"No—no!" yelled the instructor. "Run—get a bounce!"

But Bo-Gum didn't hear him. Suddenly he sprang into the air, made a dive like a swan, cut the water smoothly, and, without coming up for air, swam the entire length of the pool and back again to the diving board under the water.

He climbed gracefully out of the pool, and, facing the instructor, looked him innocently in the eyes, and said quite humbly, "That what you mean—dive?"

Even the chest of the instructor turned red.

Afterward I asked Bo-Gum, "Why did you do that?"

He was quite bland and unconcerned as he answered, "If you tell people you can do things, they expect great deeds of you. Not always can you fulfill the promise. But if you claim to know nothing, they are pleasantly surprised when they discover for themselves that you aren't as dumb as you appear. Then, too, I felt the swimming instructor displayed an unbecoming lack of modesty. I was very rude, I know, in behaving as I did. I shall some day apologize by showing him the back-hand stroke in pidgin English."

My first acquaintance with the Chinese goes back to my visits when a boy to the colorful section of old San Francisco's Chinatown, before the earthquake. I remember—somewhat dimly—the visits to this strange part of town, only a few blocks from our hotel. I recall the narrow streets, the painted doorways, the fantastic

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

shops, and the excursions into their fragrant and dimly lit interiors.

And I recall when I went back to our Iowa home I took along with me a bit of sweet-smelling sandalwood, a dried sea horse, and a sword made of Chinese pennies—"cash"—little coins, each with a square hole in the center. For years the sandalwood retained its fragrance. A puppy chewed up the sea horse, finally. And the sword was used for amateur theatricals. Where it is today, I don't know. I was in college when my mother gave it to the Ladies' Aid Society of our church. It was sold at one of their rummage sales. I hope it fell into the hands of some appreciative youngster.

There were no Chinese in our Iowa town—not even a Chinese laundryman. I read about them from time to time—fiction mostly, and believed everything I read. I gathered the impression that they were a race of master poisoners, steeped in the art of strange and outlandish murders, barbarians all, heathens of the worst type, cruel, savage, and uncivilized. I even read a book on their tong wars, and shivered. The very mention of a hatchetman frightened me. And I thought of Chinatown as a place one should never go to unless accompanied by the police.

I have since met one or two so-called "hatchetmen," and have found them quite charming persons. Like the tongs, which they serve, they are today—as we shall discuss later—neither terrifying nor sinister. One I know is something of a poet. On a sunny spring afternoon not so long ago we sat on the roof of a building in Chinatown, and he read me some of his poems. We discussed sonnets, free verse, and the position proper for

a poet to occupy in a machine-ridden, materialistic world. He has never carried a hatchet up his sleeve or a gun in his hip pocket. He has never even owned a gun. He buys his clothes on Fifth Avenue and his ties at Macy's. His manners are above reproach, and his idea of a really good time is an evening spent riding the roller coaster at Coney Island.

I suppose I might have gone on forever suspecting the Chinese of the worst, if it hadn't been for the depression. As a matter of fact, I didn't go out to seek the Chinese. I was literally thrown at them.

It was during those distressing early days of the 1930's. I was more broke than usual and, like most people in those trying times, wondering what it was all about and what way out was there for any of us. Broke and discouraged I carried with me wherever I went a hang-over of the deepest of blues.

Finally I was given employment through the Emergency Work Bureau, supported by funds raised by the Gibson Committee. (Remember it? It preceded the Works Progress Administration.) My salary was \$15 a week. It was later cut to \$12.50.

My services were a gift from the E.W.B. to the Church of All Nations, a settlement supported by the Methodist Church on Second Avenue in New York City. My particular field was drama—I had been a director of community theaters. But this was May, and the prospects of doing drama during the summer were so slight as to be almost negligible. Drama, even in a settlement house, is listed as a cultural activity and best suited to the winter months, when there aren't beaches to go to and bus rides to be taken on hot summer

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

nights. And so, after talking it over with the director in charge of the boys' department at the Church of All Nations, it was decided that drama was out.

But they had to put me to work. Now every Thursday evening and on Saturday afternoons the Chinese Athletic Club had the use of the settlement's gymnasium and swimming pool. Their present leader was leaving for the summer, and someone had to take his place. Why not me? I shuddered. But the die was cast. And so I became the athletic director of the Chinese at the Church of All Nations, and I didn't have an idea in the world as to what to do or how to go about it.

The former leader, a student of the Bible greatly liked by all the members of the club, had arranged, after the two hours spent in the gymnasium and swimming pool, another hour for round-table discussion and debates on pertinent topics such as character building, the proper and moral use of one's leisure time, and so forth. All very inspiring. It was a part of the regular program for any well-conducted athletic group—something cultural and educational, you know—not only stretch the muscles and strengthen the body, but also give the mind a little nimble exercise.

So that first evening, after the gym period—during which the retiring leader was in charge and I merely sat around dismally and tried to look wise—we all flocked in solemn procession to an upstairs room for an hour's intellectual prize fight. I was introduced as their new leader. My charges—young men in their twenties and early thirties—looked blandly at me. I looked at them. They remained impassive. I beamed pleasantly. Silence.

I didn't know a thing about them, or even who they were—save that they were Chinese. Probably laundry-men, I thought. And I wondered if they spoke English. (Later I was to discover that they were all college men, some with degrees that topped mine. And there was one moon-faced youth among the crowd who scowled with all the terrifying implications of a hatchetman.) I looked at them and shuddered. The sinister Chinese—and I was supposed to be their leader!

I was surrounded by the most perfect assortment of "poker faces" I had ever met, and it was up to me to talk. There was only one thing I could say anything about, and that was the community theater movement, in which I was interested. So I told them about it, and how it started in this country over twenty years ago. Then I asked them if they perhaps, sometime, would like to put on a play?

"We've been giving plays in China for three thousand years!" said the moon-faced youth without smiling.

I thought that amusing, and laughed. Who wouldn't? But the Chinese didn't. They just kept on staring. Well, that ended that. I had tried to start something. I hadn't got away with it. So I shut up. (Some eight years later, they actually got around to putting on a play. I helped them with it. I think I was too eager that first evening.)

My talk over, the Chinese rose, gathered up their bags with their gym suits and towels, and shuffled away home. They didn't even bid me good night. And so the curtain fell on my first appearance among the Chinese. It had been a terrific flop.

And there were others to come. On Saturday after-

noon came the younger brothers and sons of these older men—youngsters whose ages ranged from six to twelve. I was on hand at the appointed hour, determined this time to do something. I had been reading books on games since the preceding Thursday night—nice little games for young boys to play. And I had everything ready in the gymnasium when the time came.

Three o'clock—and they appeared on the dot. An hour in the gymnasium, and then at four o'clock an hour in the swimming pool. I had enough games on hand to last two or three hours at the least. It was a particularly hot afternoon in late May—one of those early summer days that descend upon New York without warning and leave everybody panting for breath. But I was ready for the Chinese.

In they trotted, some twenty of them, sleek and bland, calm and expressionless, and with them was the "sinister" elder youth of the Thursday night gathering.

"Well, well," I said in the approved manner of any leader of a gym class, "now let us all play games. We'll choose sides, and—"

"No play games, thank you," said one politely. And they all sat down upon the floor in a neat little row.

"But some nice games—" I started to say.

"Too hot, thank you," said the elder youth. Whereupon a few of the youngsters flicked fans out of somewhere and began fanning themselves.

"When we go swim, please?" asked one.

"Four o'clock is the hour," I answered.

"What time is it now, please?"

"Two minutes after three."

"We sit until four o'clock, thank you."

And there they sat, fanning themselves.

"Damn stubborn," I thought to myself.

They all looked at me. I looked at them. They seemed to dare me to make them play games. I didn't take the dare, but I wished I, too, had a fan.

Hoping to help matters along I turned to the moon-faced youth. "What are their names?" I asked.

"All have different name, thank you," he smiled back.

So I gave up and sat down on the floor at the other end of the gymnasium. For an hour we all sat and did nothing. It was a Chinese gymnasium class in action. But it was restful that hot afternoon. At four o'clock they all went swimming and promptly at five trotted back home to Chinatown. I silently packed up my games and rambled off in the opposite direction.

Far from being offended at their complete ignoring of me and my efforts to entertain, I was determined to make one more attempt to do my duty as becomes the Christian leader of a Chinese Athletic Club. The next Thursday night—when the older boys came back—I arranged for baseball, it now being the season.

"We'd rather play basketball," one said.

"But the basketball season is over," I explained. "It's now time for baseball."

"We play basketball, if you don't mind—thank you!"

"But the basketball is put away—locked up in the game room for the season—and I haven't the key."

"That's okay. We've brought our own."

And they had. So they played basketball while I re-



tired to one corner of the gymnasium and sat down again. And this sort of thing went on for a month. As a leader for an athletic club I did more sitting than I have ever done before or since. And I considered myself the worst failure that had ever been turned loose to guide and direct a club of any sort.

It wasn't until later that the moon-faced youth told me I had done quite the correct thing. In China it is always proper for the leader to sit. A Chinese mandarin, for instance, might not himself play tennis. He would sit quietly in the shade, sipping his cup of tea, while his Number One boy would play the game for him—become hot and tired—but not the mandarin. He'd enjoy the game from the sidelines without making undue physical exertion. I think there's an idea there. Anyway, these Chinese young men were really being polite and considerate of me. I was older than they were. Why should I exert myself? Why shouldn't I enjoy myself watching them play? I did.

During the whole time I was their leader I broke all the rules. I let them do exactly as they pleased from that evening on. I couldn't have done otherwise, anyway. But they liked that. As their leader I actually did nothing at all. They liked that, too.

During the first month our conversation was largely composed of but three words. At least, attempting to carry on a conversation with them, that was all I could get by way of reply. I seriously contemplated starting a course to teach them English. The three words were, "Okay—maybe—and good-by," with a polite "thank you" thrown in now and then for good measure.

My principal duty with this club was to stand in the door evenings when they arrived.

"Good evening," I would say, as any host might. "I hope you will enjoy yourselves tonight."

"Maybe—thank you," they would politely reply.

As they would be leaving, I'd again stand in the doorway.

"I trust you have had a pleasant time?"

"Okay—thank you," they'd answer.

"Come back again next Thursday evening."

"Good-by—thank you."

That's all I did. I gave up the intellectual bouts after that first disastrous attempt. They were pleased at that. They had their own methods of character building, spiced with sayings of their philosopher Confucius, and what could anyone else say that he hadn't already said?

I sometimes rambled down to Chinatown alone, walked about the streets gaping in the store windows and wondering what the strange-looking vegetables and dried foods on display there really tasted like, admiring the gay spirit that led the Chinese to paint the front of their shops bright reds, greens, and yellows, and wondering what went on behind their closed doors and shuttered windows and what sort of life they really lived in the midst of the bustle and hurry of our great city.

I wondered, too, what I was doing wrong that made this group of Chinese so distant and so aloof. Every scheme I laid, every plan I hatched to become better acquainted, every advance I made was met with a bland indifference. And I began to give up hope. A whole

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

month and a half had passed, and I didn't know them one bit better than on the first day when I had been handed to them as their well-meaning but thoroughly incompetent athletic director.

Then one afternoon the ice was broken.

## A FOOTBALL FOR THE BABY

.....

WE HAVE a new baby at our house," said eleven-year-old Quan-Ling.

Then he spat expressively and with unerring aim into the gutter. Quan-Ling had just lost a front tooth. But far from being discouraged or depressed over this obvious disfigurement, he had learned to put his misfortune to good use. He found that, by pursing his lips just so, he could spit with unchallenged aim and hit the target selected with all the skill of an expert.

This was on a pleasant Saturday afternoon. I had stood by the door and said my good-bys to the youngsters as they ambled off to Chinatown. But Quan-Ling lingered behind. So I remained, too. After all I was playing the role of host, and no host departs until his last guest leaves. We stepped outside into the warm July sunshine. Quan-Ling stood first on one foot and then on the other until, as if summoning up courage to speak, he made his announcement of the new baby.

"How nice," I said. "Boy or girl?"

Quan-Ling gave me a look of great disgust. I should have known better, I suppose, than to ask such an obvious question. A new son, particularly a first-born, is

something to boast about, and a baby daughter, however much the Chinese may love them, is merely taken for granted. Quan-Ling, after my stupid question, looked down at the gutter. A bit of orange peeling lay curled up inoffensively.

Quan-Ling pursed his lips, took careful aim, said briefly, "Boy," and then spat, hitting the orange peel for a bull's-eye.

Conversation lagged at this point and might have ceased altogether if I hadn't asked, "Whose baby is it?"

"My elder brother's," he said.

Then he scratched his right leg with his left foot, maintaining all the time a perfect balance.

"Would you like to see the baby?" he asked, and spat meditatively into the gutter again.

"Of course—yes—thanks."

"Come. We go." He put his tiny hand in mine and started to lead me down the street toward not-far-distant Chinatown.

I didn't realize it at the time, but this was a momentous occasion. I was being honored. Later I was told that Quan-Ling's invitation had not come from him, but had been prompted by his brother. And upon my response my future friendship with the Chinese would be weighed in the balance and their decision made as to whether or not I should be accepted. Perhaps I hazily suspected something of this at the time, for I wanted very much to do the right thing.

So, in my blustering, barbarian manner, I asked, "Should we take a present to the baby?"

I didn't know the Chinese custom. Do you give presents to a newborn baby? Or do you give something to

the baby's parents? Perhaps the correct thing is to congratulate the grandparents and give them something useful.

At the suggestion of a present, Quan-Ling looked at me unsmiling. "Maybe," he said, and spat at the base of a fireplug.

I was certain I had made the wrong suggestion. And all the way to Chinatown he never said a word. Obviously, I thought, you don't give presents to Chinese babies. Probably they give presents to you!

But arriving in Chinatown, Quan-Ling led me directly to a store, where in display in showcases were toys of all sorts for all ages. He stood contemplating seriously the tempting array of toys. He looked them over carefully one by one.

Then he said, "We get the baby that," and pointed to a football.

"How old is the baby?" I asked.

"Three days."

"A football for a three-day-old baby!" I exclaimed. "This isn't even football season. I should think a rattle would be more appropriate," and I pointed to one in proper baby colors, light blue and pink.

Quan-Ling eyed it thoughtfully. Then he surprised me by saying, "You get football for the baby, and rattle for me!"

This floored me, but I did as I was told.

Then, with Quan-Ling leading the way, we went to one of the apartment buildings on Mott Street. Up three long flights of stairs we climbed until, turning down the corridor, Quan-Ling pushed open a door, and I stepped inside a Chinese home for the first time.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

It was a pleasant, sunny living room, an odd mixture of Grand Rapids furniture and Chinese antiques. There was a Morris chair, a carved screen, a plain kitchen table covered with a beautifully embroidered silk scarf, a brilliant red tapestry on the wall with long rows of Chinese writing, and a ten-cent-store picture of a sailboat beside it. The room was crowded with Chinese women, children underfoot, and in the Morris chair the father of the baby.

Quan-Ling said something in Chinese. The baby was produced from an inner room. The father, one of the young men who had been coming to the gymnasium on Thursday nights, never once looked at me. As a matter of fact, even at the gymnasium, he had never spoken. I came to the conclusion that he didn't know English. The baby, wrapped in blankets, was brought out. The father took the precious bundle in his arms, looked at his son and heir, and smiled. Then, with becoming modesty, his face grew sober. He sat looking down shyly at the baby.

I admired the young son, said the usual things, and, with Quan-Ling translating for me and acting as interpreter, we got along famously. When it came time for giving the presents, I let Quan-Ling do the honors. I handed him both the football and the rattle.

Whereupon he marched bravely up to the baby and gave him the football. The rattle he kept himself. Nobody laughed. It had all the earmarks of a solemn moment. There wasn't anything more to be said, so I bowed myself out.

I was quite certain I had done the wrong thing all along the line. I had insulted Quan-Ling by getting

## A FOOTBALL FOR THE BABY

him the rattle—after all, an eleven-year-old boy must be somewhat sensitive about having a rattle given him to play with. I had insulted the father by presenting his three-day-old baby with a football. So I went to an



Italian place on the corner, bought myself a glass of milk and a sandwich, and tried to forget all about it.

Half an hour later as I started my lonely homeward way I passed a group of Chinese boys. In the center was an excited Quan-Ling, proudly displaying his new possession—a football. Puzzled, I continued silently on my way.

The next Thursday evening I had the group of young men to face, including the father of the baby. I had the distinct feeling that this would be my last



evening with them, and I had better resign in the morning as director of the Chinese Athletic Club.

Among the very last to arrive that evening was the father of the baby. Whether or not he had planned such an entrance, I do not know. Anyway, as the others trooped in, I made my usual speech, "Good evening, I trust you will have a pleasant time."

And as evasively as usual, they replied, "Maybe—thank you."

But I knew—or rather felt—that they were as distant as ever. Then came the father of the baby, and with him his three brothers. It was obvious. They were now—in some strange, subtle Chinese manner—going to give me an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth to pay me back for insulting the baby with a football and Quan-Ling with a rattle.

So I faced them with qualms as I said, "Good evening."

"Good evening," replied the father. His brothers were lined up in the background, sober and unsmiling.

"I hope," he continued, "you are enjoying yourself and having a pleasant time being associated with the Chinese Athletic Club. I know we are all enjoying having you with us."

This in perfect English. And I thought he didn't understand a word. I remembered how Quan-Ling had translated for me my compliments on his young son, and my face was crimson. But there was no retreat now.

"Why didn't you tell me you spoke English?" I asked, laughing.

"I don't very well," he replied. "I had a hell of a time with the subjunctive mood even when I attended

Columbia University. My professors all knew it, for when I graduated they gave me a diploma written in Latin."

Then we all laughed, and I knew from now on they would be my friends. The joke was on me—and he had enjoyed playing it. So we shook hands again. And one by one, his brothers came forward, too, and shook hands. It was like an old home-coming week.

"Thanks for the football you gave the baby," he said. "He has a lot of fun with it. So does Quan-Ling. I'm the only one so far that really enjoys playing with the rattle."

"It's all very confusing," I said, and I must have looked my bewilderment, for he patted me encouragingly on the shoulder and said, "I guess you don't understand the Chinese yet."

"I'd damn well like to," I replied.

"There may not be anything to understand," he said modestly. "We're all slightly nuts—but our families like us."

With that they all went to the locker room to change into their gym clothes. Only Quan-Ling, who had come with them this evening, remained behind. He beamed pleasantly at me, and I beamed as pleasantly back. For I felt I could be friends with the Chinese at last, and it was Quan-Ling with the missing tooth who had helped pave the way.

There was something I wanted to know, and there was no time like the present for finding out. So I asked him point-blank why he had given the football to the baby and kept the rattle for himself.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"You aren't old enough yet—like your elder brother—to play with a rattle," I said.

His little face grew sober. But he answered my question and gave me a typical Chinese answer.

"I want football," he said. "Nobody thinks to buy me football. When baby gets my age, he won't have football, either. Nobody thinks to buy him football. He gets things only for baby. So I take rattle, and give him football. Then I loan him my rattle, and he loan me the football. I play with football now. He play with rattle. When he gets old as me, he then has football to play with. So we both have football because I loan him rattle. Okay?"

"Okay!" I responded.

And that was my first insight into Chinese psychology. As I grew to know them better, I discovered they did most of their thinking that way. Never in a straight line—never straight to the point. Always round a circle. It's as if one wanting to go to Chicago from New York should go by way of New Orleans. And perhaps that's the best way. You get there ultimately, and have seen a lot of things on the way that you would have missed had you gone the direct route. But that way of doing things takes time. It takes time to know the Chinese. Certainly they took their time getting acquainted with me. But there was a reason back of their aloofness. They weren't being rude or unfriendly. They were really being very polite in their own, strange way.

That evening after the gym period and the hour's swim in the pool they invited me to go to Chinatown with them. It was my first invitation and I accepted gladly.

## A FOOTBALL FOR THE BABY

As we started off, the moon-faced youth—the “sinister”-looking one who scowled so effectively—fell into step with me. The rest trooped on ahead, chattering like magpies.

“What do you think of Einstein?” he asked abruptly.

“I’ve never given him a thought,” I replied honestly. “What do you?”

“He’s okay. But I thought that you, having once been a college professor—”

“How did you know that?” I asked. “I hadn’t told you.”

In fact, save that first evening when I talked about my interest in community drama, I hadn’t told them a thing about myself. I hadn’t had a chance.

“We made inquiries about you,” he replied blandly. “Anybody who gets handed to us on a brass platter like you—needs investigating.”

“Why?”

“If you were invited to ride in a second-hand Ford without much gas, a punctured tire, and worn-out brakes, you’d want to know if the driver was cautious, wouldn’t you? We wanted to know something about our new leader.”

“I hope the answers were satisfactory.”

“No. Most unsatisfactory. We couldn’t find a thing to your credit. That’s why we decided to like you,” he said solemnly.

“That’s fine,” I murmured. Was he serious? Or was he joking? I didn’t know.

“How do you like us?” he asked.

“Can’t find a thing to your credit!” I answered.

My reply seemed to please him, for he smiled for the

first time. "Good," he said. "We understand each other. I'm a sinister Chinese. My name's Fu Manchu. What's your name?"

"Jesse James. I'm the terror of the Chinese Athletic Club."

He laughed and relented. "My real name's Eddie Wu. I got dubbed Eddie when I went to the American school. Glad to know you."

Whereupon, having formally introduced ourselves, we shook hands.

"You mustn't let the boys kid you," he continued. "They all mean well. Just don't believe anything you hear about the Chinese. It will be all wrong, anyway."

"Thanks for the tip. I'm glad you can talk. When I first met you I was afraid you didn't know much English."

"Look," he said, and pulled a little notebook out of his pocket. "Every time I hear a new slang phrase, I jot it down. Since I've got to live in this country, I thought I might as well know the language. Some day let me go over these with you—maybe you'll know some slang I haven't got here."

"Why not concentrate on good words, rather than slang?" I asked professorially.

"The spoken language of the streets today is the written language of the scholars of tomorrow. I want to be prepared," he answered.

"Did you think that up yourself?" I asked.

"I did. But it's probably been said somewhere by somebody. There's nothing original."

As time went on, and I grew to know Eddie Wu better, I found him one of the most intelligent young men

## A FOOTBALL FOR THE BABY

I've ever met. One of the most charming, too. He'd rather sit and talk than work.

But tonight I was curious about him and the Chinese, and even my invitation to Chinatown, so I asked him, "Why did you scowl so fiercely that first evening?"

"What have you ever said or done to make me laugh?" he answered.

"What opportunity have you ever given me?"

"Go ahead. I'm listening."

I thought I'd try some of his own Chinese tactics on him. So I remained silent and didn't say a word for two whole blocks. And I was determined not to say anything until he broke the silence.

At the end of the second block he laughed and said, "That's the funniest story I've ever heard. Okay. You win. You'll make a good Chinaman."

"What makes you think that?"

"You let us do as we want—we'll do it, anyway."

"Yes—I know. You are damn stubborn."

"Yes, but that didn't make you sore. Sort of patient, aren't you? We like that. Then, too, I think you can appreciate a joke."

"I hope so."

"I mean, one on yourself!"

"I've long felt that's the funniest joke of all. If the day comes I can't laugh at myself—take me out and bury me."

"That's good Chinese philosophy. I was certain—even that first evening when you talked to us—you realized how funny it was. I sort of made up my mind then you were just as big a damn fool as I am."

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"Then why didn't you say so then—instead of waiting until now?"

"Not good manners!"

I was puzzled and said so.

"When you get to know us Chinese better you'll understand," he explained. "You see, Hing is our president." (Hing is the father of the baby to whom I had given the football.) "He's our leader. What he says goes with us. That's why we elected him leader. And until he was willing to make the first overtures of friendship, the rest of us all held back. It's a Chinese custom—good manners. And Hing wanted to wait until he had something of which to be proud—his son, his first-born."

"But suppose it had been a girl?" I asked.

"I might have gone on scowling at you for another year," he responded blissfully. "It's all very simple. His son arrived, as expected. So he had his younger brother invite you down to see the baby. You did quite the right thing in the Chinese manner. You admired the baby, congratulated the father, and everybody was happy. So Hing passed around the word that from now on everything was okay. That's the reason. Simple— isn't it?"

By this time we were in Chinatown, and Eddie Wu told me this was a banquet Hing was giving to his friends in celebration of his first-born, a son.

We went to the upper floor of a Chinese restaurant where we could dine in private. And what a feast we had. But then the Chinese enjoy a heavy meal just before going to bed. The tables were all ready for us; chopsticks at every place, including my own. I looked about in vain for a knife and fork.

## A FOOTBALL FOR THE BABY

"If you are going to be with us," said Eddie Wu, "please learn to use chopsticks. It's the only way we like to eat."

So chopsticks it was, for I was hungry, and the dishes brought in—not chop suey or chow mein, but real Chinese dishes—were too tempting. Chopsticks are easy, once you get the hang of it. But that first night my friends all howled as I struggled along. However, I managed, after a fashion. And I took a pair home to practice with. Ever since then whenever I've had a Chinese dinner I've always used chopsticks. I think it's the only way to eat, just as I think Chinese food is the best in the world.

Certainly I remember that first real Chinese banquet I had with pleasure, and I remember, too, that one choice piece of delicious lobster that remained in the dish. All of us at our table eyed it hungrily, for it was a large, juicy claw.

"It's good manners among us Cantonese," said Eddie Wu, "always to leave one morsel in the dish."

"But our leader isn't Cantonese," said Hing.

"And my manners are very bad," I added greedily.

"That remains to be seen," said Eddie courteously.

"However," said Hing, who was the leader and whose word should be obeyed, "since he isn't Cantonese and since he says his manners are bad, and this is the first time he's ever had lobster Chinese style, I think, as a courtesy to him, he should be entitled to break all rules and have that piece of lobster!"

"Second the motion!" everyone exclaimed.

So gingerly, after thanking them profusely for the honor they were conferring on me, with my fumbling



chopsticks I reached for the lobster claw. I managed to get hold of it and was lifting it from the dish, when every chopstick at the table went into action. In mid-air, with deftly handled chopsticks, that claw was fought over. It passed from chopstick to chopstick, until finally one laughing youth, who I am certain must have come from a family of jugglers, managed to get it into his rice bowl.

And that was the beginning of my friendship with the Chinese. I was with them as their athletic director—their sitting-down, do-nothing director—for over a year and a half. Then a community theater job bobbed up in Florida, and I was away for a while. But I always came back to Chinatown, and renewed my acquaintance. I had other jobs about the country now and then, too, and met and knew other Chinese elsewhere. But always upon my return I went back to Chinatown and with each visit I discovered something new and something really interesting about them.

And it didn't take me long to learn that the Chinese love a joke. Always up their sleeves, instead of the proverbial hatchet, is a joke of some sort. But then that's to be expected. A civilization as old as the Chinese must, by necessity, have learned that life is not always a bed of roses.

Or as Eddie Wu phrased it for me one summer evening as we sat with a glass of beer in front of us at a sidewalk café, "This is a hard life. No mistake about that. The cards are wrong from the very start. One after another the cards are stacked against us in the game of life and death. And they are played against us, too, one at a time. You work like a dog all day, and

## A FOOTBALL FOR THE BABY

what does it get you? Not even a compliment from your boss. You slave your whole life away and all you get in the end is a few floral wreaths, and if you've made enough money in your lifetime to allow your family a few extravagances, you get a marble monument over your grave you never even see. You're born in this world stark naked—turned loose in a modest world without a stitch of clothing, and left to shift for yourself. And you spend your whole life in a vain effort to keep your pants on."

"But what's the answer?" I asked.

"A sense of humor!"

"And what's that?"

"Merely the realization that the joke—even the joke of being alive and living—is in you yourself. And no matter how funny you may think other people are, you are a damn sight funnier if you but take time to look at yourself in the mirror—preferably a cracked one.

"And by laughing at myself I learn tolerance toward others. Knowing how funny I am, I can't very well get angry at the faults and foibles of my friends. I don't expect too much from them. And so I find, by laughing at myself, that I live in peace among my fellow men. I often think a sense of humor—and not armaments—will some day save the world."

Because the Chinese see the comic spirit in all things and approach their problems from a humorous viewpoint, they have fun in living. They love playing a joke on their friends and having the joke handed back, even if it is at their expense. It's a childlike playfulness, a gentle, friendly sort of humor. Nor do they expect a quick retort. Once the joke is played on you, there's no

hurry. Tomorrow, or the next day, or even the next month is ample time to hand the joke back. But it must be handed back, for that's the fun of playing the game.

There is a restaurant in Chinatown where I often go. The owners are friends of mine, particularly Jung. One day I had lunch there and a long chat with Jung, who sat down at the table with me. On my way home, reaching into my pocket, I found it full of toothpicks. Jung was having his little joke.

A few days later Eddie Wu came to see me. He was obviously disturbed over something.

"I have sad news for you," he said. "Jung is not your friend."

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"He is saying terrible things about you. He says you are light-fingered—that you came into his restaurant the other day and stole all his toothpicks."

I admitted my guilt. "Yes," I said, "a whole pocketful. I do things like that—not always meaning to. What should I do? Return them to Jung and confess I didn't know how they got into my pocket?"

"No—that wouldn't do at all. Perhaps if from now on you reformed and led an honest life, set Jung a good example, in time he may forgive and forget."

"I'll try," I said humbly. "Although the bad habit of many years is difficult to overcome."

A week or so later I again had lunch at Jung's restaurant. He sat down and chatted with me as if nothing had happened. Luncheon finished I rose and left without paying the check. I visited some other friends in Chinatown and about an hour later returned to Jung's restaurant.

## A FOOTBALL FOR THE BABY

I was profuse with my apologies as I laid the unpaid check and my money on the counter. "I do things like this," I said. "Do them all the time—and consciously. I'm light-fingered, you know. But I don't ever want to rob you, Jung, because you are my friend."

Jung soberly tore up the check, handed me my money back, and grinned happily as he said, "Okay—you win!"

## HOT POTATOES

.....

IT WAS in midwinter, several months after my becoming acquainted with the Chinese, that I was invited to join one of their secret societies. It took Georgie Ong a long time to gather courage to extend the invitation. But the carefully thought out plans that ultimately led to my becoming a member in good standing were actually started during that first summer.

On Saturday afternoons I would sometimes, at the invitation of the younger boys, walk home with them to Chinatown. One hot August day Georgie Ong and Leonard Chu were my escorts. Georgie was eleven years old and Leonard nine. As we left the gymnasium they had a whispered consultation, and I felt something was in the wind.

Walking along the Bowery they started to play a game with me. They would run ahead and hide in a doorway. Then when I came along they'd jump out and I'd pretend to be frightened. The greater the fear I expressed at their softly spoken "Boos," the greater their pleasure and amusement. It was a boiling hot day, and where they got the energy to dash along and scamper in and out of doorways was beyond me. It was so

## HOT POTATOES

hot that even the loafers along the Bowery didn't bother to register surprise at two small Chinese boys playing hide-and-seek with a grown man. I took off my coat and swung it over my shoulder. I'd make faint-hearted attempts to catch them, but they'd elude me every time.

"You policemen—we crooks! Catch us and we go to jail!" cried Leonard, then he ducked into a doorway.

I made one more attempt, which I thought would again prove futile, but strange to say, this time they were willing victims and suddenly allowed themselves to be captured.

"Come on," I said, taking each by the hand, "now we go to jail!"

Leonard smiled up at me and asked quite innocently, "Candy store jail or ice-cream store jail?"

Now what would you have done? We decided on "ice-cream store jail." I've always suspected that the sole reason for playing the game was to ask me that question when they allowed themselves to be caught. It was a lot of work and quite an effort on this hot afternoon, but the reward of an ice-cream cone was, to them, worth it.

We had our ice cream and the game was over. On down the Bowery we paraded, cool within and cool without. At least the Chinese boys were, for once the cones were finished, they drew forth their fans. Sedate and aloof we proceeded on our way, me in the center, and on each side a Chinese boy unconcerned, serene and self-controlled, fanning himself.

Two husky truck drivers, stripped to the waist, drip-

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

ping with perspiration, saw us. The mouth of one fell open.

"Look," said one. "I'm going nuts!"



"What the hell?" exclaimed the other, wiping his wet brow with the back of his hand.

But none of us pretended we heard. After all the

## HOT POTATOES

Chinese were displaying good sense on a hot day, and what does it matter if the rest of the world suffers because they don't carry fans?

Of course, after this first treat the word somehow spread around that I was amenable to the buying of soft drinks and ice-cream cones. But unlike youths of other races never once did they directly request that I buy them a soda. Such a method is far too obvious, and has not the sporting elements of a game with the pleasures of the ultimate victory in the final attaining.

I'd get such indefinite hints as, "My little brother had a soda pop yesterday, and it made him sick. I don't think soda pops are good to drink, do you?"

I soon learned that the proper answer, in such cases, was to compare ages, and convince an eleven-year-old youngster that a man of his age can take a soda pop where a two-year-old baby brother can't.

So on Saturday afternoons those who walked with me to Chinatown always had "treats." But they were most considerate. In all some thirty youngsters would come to the gymnasium on Saturday afternoon. But not the whole thirty would walk home with me at one time. They'd take turns. So within the space of a few weeks, everyone would have had a "treat."

Then it was, as I later discovered, that Georgie Ong had an idea. Winter had now come. Ice cream and soda pops were no longer popular. But at a stand on the Bowery paper sacks of greasy, and to me indigestible, French fried potatoes were for sale. Georgie loved these hot potatoes. I suppose he sometimes got tired of the usual rice at home meals. And hot potatoes were a great luxury. So the "treats" became hot potatoes. I am cer-



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

tain there would have been more than one mother who would have scolded had she known her young son was ruining his supper by eating those unsanitary, greasy hot potatoes. And I think the boys knew their mothers would scold, too, for by the time we would arrive in Chinatown every potato had vanished.

Now with any group of boys there naturally will be cliques. And so with the Chinese. But I always felt that the little groups formed within the club as a whole were not of their own making, based on the usual similar tastes and mutual understandings. With the Chinese the cliques formed had something to do with family connections, business associations of their fathers, and way in the background the tongs their fathers belonged to and their Chinese political affiliations. With the Chinese it's "like father, like son."

Georgie Ong was obviously the leader of a group of five oddly assorted boys. I never could quite puzzle out why those particular boys ran together. There were other cliques, too, and other leaders. And I could sense between these various leaders of the groups a constant rivalry for leadership of the whole younger boys' club. And I became suspicious that Georgie, in his boyish way, was scheming to become Number One leader.

It all started innocently enough.

"Walk home with us today?" one of Georgie's followers would ask.

And as we started out somehow the others—including Georgie—would appear. The next week another boy, and the same group would fall in behind. And the next the same thing. Then I began to wonder, Ob-

## HOT POTATOES

viously Georgie was building up a monopoly on hot potatoes.

The other boys would pass by on the opposite side of the street, never seeing us, or pretending not to, at least. Plainly I was playing favorites. I was treating only Georgie and his friends. And I realized this would never do.

So the next Saturday I told Georgie I was walking to Chinatown with some of the other boys.

"Okay," said Georgie as if it didn't matter in the least.

But he must have pondered seriously on the matter, for the following Saturday he came up to me before the gymnasium period, looking and acting very mysterious. He drew me to a corner and began whispering to me. I leaned over and gave an attentive ear.

"We think," he whispered, "we'll invite you to join our secret society."

Then he scampered away without waiting for an answer. I was intrigued. Who wouldn't be? Is there anybody who can resist an invitation to a secret society?

Not once during the gym period and the swim in the pool that followed did Georgie look at me. But as he was leaving he gave me a quizzical glance that seemed to ask, "What is the answer?"

I nodded an "okay."

As I was leaving the settlement house that afternoon I found, waiting for me outside on the sidewalk, Georgie and his five cohorts, all maintaining a mysterious silence. In silence we walked down the Bowery. In silence we had our hot potatoes.

And then on the busy corner of the Bowery and

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

Canal Street, with traffic as usual in a tangle and the elevated thundering overhead, I was initiated into the secrets of Georgie's secret society. I was given the password and also the proper reply.

"When someone whispers that password to you," said Georgie, "it means he gets to walk home with you that day. Okay?"

I agreed, even though Georgie's maneuverings were pretty obvious.

I am under solemn oath not to tell the password—not the real one, that is. For the password didn't belong to me and I was never supposed to use it. However, I was honored by being the only living person who could make the proper reply.

The password was something like this, "Why are red dragons so ferocious?" (Although that isn't it, of course—the real password had more poetry in it.)

But the reply, which only I was entitled to make, was "Hot potatoes."

I could see through Georgie's scheme, of course, and was fully determined when the password was whispered to me, to reply only when it was Georgie's turn to walk home and have "treats."

But Georgie surprised me. The next week two small boys, not of his gang, drew me aside before the gym period and whispered in my ear the secret password. But instead of seven boys and Georgie walking home—for I had concluded that Georgie had invited two more boys to join the secret society—there were only Georgie and five boys as usual. And every Saturday after that, five there always were—including Georgie, of course.

He knew it wasn't to my liking to play favorites, so

## HOT POTATOES

he managed as the weeks went by to vary the group so that every member of the gym class sooner or later walked down to Chinatown and had hot potatoes. But he always selected the boys, and I have no doubt profited by the wisdom of his choice with an extra marble or two or some other boyish treasure. But then it was his idea, and why shouldn't he make a little profit on the side?

But even that wasn't the idea back of it all in Georgie's mind. And it wasn't until spring that I knew the real answer. And then it was all clear to me, his organizing of a secret society. For he had proved himself an able general, and when the election of club officers for the following winter was held, Georgie was unanimously selected as president.

And I heartily approved the choice. Georgie had made it easy for me. Nobody that whole winter had been slighted. I had played no favorites, and my face had been saved.

Today Georgie is grown up and attending Columbia University. I rarely see him, but I hear he stands high in his class and is a brilliant student. However, his friends no longer call him "Georgie." With the dignity of his twenty years it is now "George."

One day not so long ago I was gaping in a store window on Fifth Avenue, when a voice behind me whispered in my ear the secret password.

"Hot potatoes!" I cried.

I turned around and there was George, beaming from ear to ear.

"Good lord," I said, after greeting him, "I thought you had forgotten that long ago."

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"I wondered if you had," he replied.

"Never," I laughed. "I heard it often enough that winter. Come along—what'll you have?"

He shook his head and didn't budge.

"You say the password," he said.

I did, and he answered me grinning, "Hot potatoes. It's my turn now. Lunch is on me. You treated us boys in those old days. We'll do the treating now. From now on you are the only one who can say the password, and we're the ones who'll make the proper reply. But," he added thoughtfully, and again saving my face, "you can't ever say it unless someone asks you to. Okay?"

"Okay!" I said. So we had lunch together and real French fried potatoes as becomes members in good standing of the same secret society.

But even as children they were generous to an extreme. Nor was it all "treats" on my part, either. I could never admire one of their boyish treasures, a dried frog, a handful of marbles, a top with a merry tune as it spun, or a bent penny used as a lucky pocket piece, but what the object of my admiration would immediately be given to me.

This proved embarrassing, for after all, what good use could I make of a dried frog?

But it was Chinese politeness.

I had to go to Eddie Wu for an explanation. "Sure," he said, "when a kid gives you something you admire, accept it. It doesn't mean anything for a friend to give you a present of something he doesn't want himself. Anybody can do that. But when a Chinese gives a present, he wants the recipient to be pleased. Therefore when you admire a treasured possession, something

## HOT POTATOES

your friend has owned and loved, he knows you like it. Therefore it's yours. And the gift becomes doubly precious. And both are happy; you in possessing something your friend has once owned and loved, and he in knowing you will treasure it highly because it means so much to him."

That may be the Chinese way of looking at it, and a generous, commendable attitude. However, accepting what I knew was a prized possession from a young Chinese lad continued to bother me. I didn't want to be selfish. So I stopped admiring their treasures. This, too, was wrong.

Yet who can resist going into proper raptures when a nine-year-old Chinese boy, with pride of possession in his eyes, shows you the cracked button of a defeated political candidate which he has found in a gutter? And what is to be done when, after your admiration, he asks you to accept it as a gift from him?

I went to Eddie Wu with this problem. He laughed and gave me the Chinese answer.

So the next time I was shown a handful of caps from an odd assortment of beer bottles, I accepted the gift urged upon me, and thanked the giver profusely. I dropped them into my pocket and went on my way, jingling the caps merrily.

An hour later I came back to where I had left my little friend. He looked sad, his hands thrust deep into his empty pockets. He had been polite, it was true, but does the knowledge of the observance of good manners—particularly to a nine-year-old—offer as much genuine pleasure as the possession of a pocketful of beer caps?

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"Look," I said, "I've had a lot of fun with these. But suppose you keep them for me until I'm in Chinatown next time. Then I can play with them again."

And into his outstretched hands I dropped the caps, one by one. And we were both happy.

Discipline among this group of young Chinese boys was no problem at all. I had had previous experience with boys' clubs, and have talked to various leaders of activities in other settlement houses, and have heard tales ranging all the way from rank disobedience to stolen articles, of rules deliberately broken, and disrespect amounting to impertinence. But with the Chinese the problem of discipline was simple. Sometimes almost too simple.

At first I would give my instructions. Often a blank look of misunderstanding would be mine. Words in Chinese would be tumbled about. Then the oldest youth present would come up and ask me what it was I wanted. I'd repeat the request. More Chinese words I didn't understand, and my instructions would be carried out to the last minute detail.

I was puzzled, and wondered why this was so. But I do know that whenever I had any suggestions to make as to behavior I would merely tell them to the oldest boy present, who would pass on what I had in mind, and there would never be a dispute.

It was as easy as all that. That there was a philosophical reason back of all this, I did not at the time suspect, but it was a rule that was never broken.

In time I stumbled onto the answer, and found it

## HOT POTATOES

was the Chinese way of living, a manner and a code of ethics deeply rooted in their philosophy, and one of the answers to the Chinese way of doing things.

One morning I was in a barber shop in my neighborhood waiting my turn for the inevitable haircut. I picked up a newspaper.

As I read I ran across a news story concerning a dinner of the Chinese division of the Inter-Racial Conference in Chinatown. And there was a statement made by Mr. Ben Howe, chairman of the City Fusion Party, which particularly attracted my attention. This was it:

"Mr. Howe quoted police records to show that the ratio of juvenile delinquency in Chinatown is the lowest of any area in the city."

Juvenile delinquency low in Chinatown? I could well believe it, for from my own experience I had discovered that disobedience was rare. But the reasons for this intrigued my curiosity. And I started out to learn for myself the whys and the wherefores.

I went to the police stations and made inquiries. I wrote letters to police captains in other cities. I finally had the facts in the case. I also wanted the Chinese interpretation of these facts. So I went to Chinatown and asked questions.

Eddie Wu at first was, for a wonder, reluctant to talk.

"I don't think you should ask me," he said.

"Why not?"

"Let me talk to my father first," he said, "and see if he thinks I should tell you the truth. Come back tomorrow."



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

There's no use trying to hurry the Chinese, so patiently I returned on the next day to see Eddie Wu.

"My father thinks I should confess," said Eddie quietly. "You see, I am known in Chinatown as 'Number One Bad Boy.' Once when I was ten years old I was arrested!"

## NUMBER ONE BAD BOY

.....

FROM the story Eddie Wu told me I can well picture the scene. Remember he was only ten years old, but probably that is no legitimate excuse. And yet—even like some grownups—he got tired of it all one day and started out on his own to see the world.

For three days the police searched for him throughout New York. When they finally found him he was sitting quietly on a bench in Battery Park watching the ships go out to sea.

Beside him was a paper bag full of peanuts. That's how he had spent his last nickel. But he had been careful not to scatter the shells on the walk. Perhaps that would count in his favor.

When the officer arrested him, he smiled and pointed to the harbor.

"Nice," he said. "Many ships. Some big. Some small. All puff-puff and go sailing. Pretty smoke. Very nice."

He was taken to the Children's Court and his father was summoned. When he appeared he proved to be a distinguished-looking, elderly man, neatly clad. His bland face was expressionless, and he barely looked at

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

his miscreant son, as he stood before the judge, holding his hat demurely in front of him.

The judge frowned sternly at the boy.

"What's the charge, officer?"

"Eddie Wu. Age, ten. Offense, truancy. Been absent from school a week, Your Honor."

The judge turned to his father and asked, "Do you speak English?"

"I try serenely," was the calm reply.

"You are the first Chinese boy I've had in this court in twenty-three years," said the judge severely.

Mr. Wu plainly showed his embarrassment as he said, "I humbly apologize to the United States government for my son's heinous offense. I regret that my humble person should be brought into court and stand disgraced before this beautiful bar of justice. I am completely ashamed."

"Why did you run away from school?" the judge asked Eddie.

Eddie Wu looked at his father, who nodded his head as if giving him permission to speak.

Then Eddie drew a long, deep breath and plunged into his confession. "Teacher say last week we all naughty boys in class. She say, 'You cause me great pain. I no sleep nights. You very bad.' And I am very much ashamed. So not to make her sad and suffer, I not go to school."

The judge started, choked, and felt his face turning red.

"Honorable sir," said Mr. Wu, "before you pass sentence upon my great criminal of a son, may I make statement?" When the judge nodded his approval, Mr.

Wu continued, "Upon my ill-mannered self is the blame for my son's misdeeds to be placed. That he should neglect his studies and not heed my overwhelming desire to have him become great scholar is completely my fault. I have not properly instructed him in the precepts of the philosophers. Therefore, whereas, and inasmuch, as you so wisely put it, kindly sentence me to prison for a long term in place of my unknowing son. I am at fault. I have lost much face. I thank you."

The judge had never heard anything quite like this before. Usually the parents blame the teacher, the school, the truant officer, and have every sort of alibi but their own failure. But he couldn't sit here all day listening to this Chinese father expound on his own personal shortcomings.

"Sentence suspended," he said abruptly.

"Thank you," said Mr. Wu, without smiling. "I assure your honorable person I shall not again disgrace myself nor cause you such inconvenience. I shall now, my head bowed in shame, return home to Chinatown. And not again, I promise you, will my ex-criminal of a son disgrace himself nor prove a bad example to his American neighbors."

And taking Eddie by the hand, he led him from the courtroom.

Has he kept his promise? I am inclined to think so. For even though Eddie is now grown, and as I have said can scowl with all the deadly ferociousness of a Public Enemy Number One, yet beneath the surface he is as gentle as a dove and as well behaved.

And what is true of Mr. Wu and his son Eddie is also true of other fathers and sons in Chinatown. And it is

strange that it should be so. For Chinatown is one of the most congested areas in Manhattan. Some eight thousand persons live there within a radius of eight city blocks. And we are often told by our social workers that in crowded tenements crime and vice of all sorts find their most fertile breeding ground.

If that is true, Chinatown is no place to take a child and allow him to run loose about the streets. And how could Mr. Wu expect to raise his son to be a law-abiding American citizen in such an evil atmosphere?

And yet according to the records at the Juvenile Aid Bureau in this area, known as the Fifth Precinct, among the 1,600 children, about a third of them being Chinese, there were in 1936, for example, only fourteen arrests made of children under sixteen years of age. And of these fourteen only one was a Chinese child.

This is exceptionally low when compared with the twenty-eighth Precinct in Harlem where 275 juvenile arrests were made in that same year. These figures were given me through the courtesy of the Juvenile Aid Bureau of the New York Police Department.

This low ratio of juvenile delinquency is also true of other cities in the United States where there are Chinatowns. I wrote to the various police departments in these cities and the answers I received all said the same thing, that Chinese children figure very slightly in their delinquency problem. In fact a police captain in Los Angeles said in concluding his letter, "One factor that appears as a probable cause of low delinquency among the Chinese is the fact that the Chinese children are trained to respect their parents and uphold the family ideals to a greater extent than other nationalities."

I wondered if this was the right answer to the question. Have the Chinese their own system of preventing juvenile delinquency? Don't their children ever get into trouble? Or is it they never get caught? And what exactly is the relation of the parent to the child?

I asked Eddie Wu these questions.

In reply he said, "My father can best explain this to you. He is a scholar and a philosopher, and can quote Confucius freely without batting an eye."

So an appointment was made with Mr. Wu, whom I had never met. And in a tiny restaurant where only Chinese go, late one afternoon we sat around a table and had tea and *char see*—Chinese pastry served only during the day.

Mr. Wu was an elderly, dignified gentleman. He rarely smiled, yet there was a humorous twinkle in his eye. He wore his American-made clothes with neatness and precision, yet he sometimes fumbled with his vest, as if he wondered what he was doing with such an unnecessary article of clothes. At home, Eddie told me, he often slipped into comfortable Chinese gowns, and padded about the house in slippers. For Mr. Wu was old China, and as the years sped past he more and more reverted to the customs and manners of his native country. He had worked hard as a young man in a noisy and abrupt America, and now that he was getting old he withdrew into the leisureliness and calmness of soul that comes from his beloved China and things Chinese. And he had instructed Eddie that when he died he wished his bones sent back to China to be buried alongside the graves of his ancestors in Kwangtung, and his spirit could forever be at peace.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

I've seen him going about the streets, half lost in his dreams and totally oblivious of the roar and splatter of the world about him; a quaint, old-fashioned figure. He wore his hat set squarely on his head. And rain or shine, he always carried an umbrella. He believed in being prepared for any emergency.

He greeted me courteously and immediately his friendly manner and glance of sympathetic understanding put me at my ease. I sat for some time silent, while Eddie in Chinese asked the questions for which I was seeking an answer.

"Yes, it is true," he said at last, sipping his Wah Chah jasmine tea, "my son was once arrested. He is known in Chinatown as 'Number One Bad Boy.' "

Eddie was sad of face as he humbly murmured, "Must I be reminded forever of my wild oat?"

"Yes—for I have eaten it," replied Mr. Wu. "Yet never again will he disgrace me, nor be late for his classes."

"How do you manage?" I asked.

"Very difficult," said Mr. Wu. "I work hard and perspire freely to set him a good example. I deny myself many foolish pleasures, such as a man of my age is entitled to. But it is worth it. If I do not set him a good example, who will? If he cannot admire his father's moral character—if I possess one—who can he admire?"

This answer is typical of a Chinese father. And when I asked Mr. Wu why he felt this way, he patiently explained to me that the first of all virtues, according to Confucius, who wrote the Chinese "Ten Commandments," is filial piety.

"Those who love their parents dare not show hatred

to others," said Confucius. "Those who respect their parents, dare not show rudeness to others."

And again he said to his disciples, "The reason why the gentleman teaches filial piety is not because it is to be seen in the home and everyday life. He teaches filial piety in order that man may respect all those who are fathers in the world. He teaches brotherliness in the younger brother, in order that man may respect all those who are elder brothers in the world. He teaches the duty of the subject in order that man may respect all who are rulers in the world."

And in summing up, Confucius said, "Filial piety is the basis of virtue, and the origin of culture. The body and hair and skin are received from the parents, and may not be injured; this is the beginning of filial piety. To do the right thing and walk according to the right morals, thus leaving a good name to posterity, in order to glorify one's ancestors; this is the culmination of filial piety. Filial piety begins with serving one's parents, leads to serving one's kind, and ends in establishing one's character."

And to illustrate these sayings of Confucius, Mr. Wu told me a story, a legend of old China. It is the Chinese version of our Prodigal Son story. Here it is, as he told it to me.

Centuries ago in a village in the Province of Szechuan there was a man who had a son. Very wealthy was this man, and his rich fields stretched to the east, and the west, and the north, and the south. And he indulged his son and gave him everything he asked for. But the son was not satisfied and was always asking for more, and yet more. And he was spending his money



foolishly in gambling and feasting and drinking in the houses of the daughters of joy. And the father learned of this and was sad. And he said to his son, "I have no more cash to give you to spend in riotous living."

The son was angry, and made angry threats. And the father feared for his life. That night he placed a dummy in his bed. And wisely, for the son stealing into his father's Room for Peaceful Slumber, thrust a knife through the dummy, robbed the lacquered chest where the gold was kept, and fled.

And the father grieved, for he had lost his son. Years sped past with running feet, and fate, who plays many a strange trick in the lives of men, turned evil into good and good into evil. And the father became a beggar and sat outside the village walls holding his rice bowl in his upturned hand. In a distant city the son learned through bitter experience the error of his ways. He became a scholar and in the Hall of Examinations passed the tests with highest honors. And the Emperor rewarded him, as was the custom, by making him a Magistrate, and so because of his wisdom he sat in the Court of Justice listening to the disputes of his fellow men.

One day there was brought before him an old man, lean and hungry, who had been caught pilfering a shop in the Street of the Merchants. And the son, in this old man who stood trembling before him, recognized his father. But the father, in the Magistrate wearing the black cap with the red button, did not recognize his son.

"Have you no sons, *sin shang* [meaning "elder one born before me"] to take care of you in your old age?"

asked the Magistrate, seeming to be stern, but in reality making an effort to control his emotions.

And the father bowed his head in shame and told the story of his errant son. The Magistrate was silent. Finally he spoke, but before passing judgment instructed the father to go to a certain orchard and chop down a tree that grew there—a tree bent and twisted. The father did as he was instructed and brought the tree back to the Court of Justice.

Then the Magistrate said, "Willful and wild grew this tree, and the fruit it bore was bitter and sour. Had it been given loving care and guidance when it was young and tender it would have grown straight and strong. So it is with a man's first-born male child. As the twig is bent, so grows the tree."

The father bowed his head and asked for proper punishment, not for the petty theft he had committed, but for the greater crime of not having reared his son properly.

Whereupon the Magistrate, feeling that honest confession was punishment enough, revealed his identity, and they lived happily ever after.

"So it is the father who is always blamed in Chinatown when the child is naughty?" I said.

"Oh, always," replied Mr. Wu, surprised that I should ask such an obvious question. "The way to discipline a Chinese child is to say, in Chinese, of course, 'Whose child is this who is so ill-bred and so lacking in good manners?' "

"That's a worse insult to the Chinese than that favorite expression among the he-men of the West that

must always be said with a smile," put in Eddie, laughing.

"The Chinese respect their elders," said Mr. Wu. "They always obey their parents. That is, nearly always," he added softly. "But when a child in Chinatown is bad-mannered and misbehaves, it is the father who is criticized. It is his first duty to his country, his neighbors and himself to train his children properly."

"But suppose he is too busy to do that?" I asked Mr. Wu.

"Then he loses face among the Chinese," was the answer. "I once knew a boy who was very, very bad. With a piece of chalk he wrote some big words all over the side of a public building. Very bad manners. Displaying one's learning in public—lacking in modesty. But I did not go directly to the father and tell him of his son's misdeeds. That would be bad manners on my part. Also, no fun. He would remind me of my own weaknesses.

"So in Chinese I wrote on the wall, also in chalk, 'This was written by Ting-Fang, the son of Chong, and is very bad writing.' Everybody saw that, and everybody told Chong and laughed at him. So he went and wrote in chalk, 'My son shall in the future write like this—better writing, I hope. And I am grateful to Wu Mun-Hing for showing me the error of my ways.'"

Eddie, behind his father's back, gave me a sly wink.

I believe Mr. Wu saw the joke, too, but he gave no sign. He only smiled faintly as he added, "Chong and I ever since have been the best of friends. He punished his son severely, and spent much time after that teaching him to write correctly."

"But supposing Chong didn't care—what would happen then?" I asked.

"All his neighbors, all his *hing dai* [his cousins], all his friends and neighbors and business associates would speak to him, and if he remained stubborn they would not invite him into their homes, nor would he be asked to banquets and feasts. Why invite a bad-mannered man unable to train his own son in good manners? He might do something to embarrass everybody present. And if he loses face with his family and cousins, he might as well go out and make a gun go pop-pop into his heart. Nobody would do business with him any more, and it's better to have a well-trained son than no tinkle of cash in the cash box. What happiness can wealth bring us, if our homes are not in order? Right?"

"Agreed," I said. "So the Chinese parent takes it upon himself to discipline his children, and doesn't leave that unpleasant task to the school teacher, the police, and the aunts and uncles?"

"Quite true. We punish the first offense, and do not wait until disobedience becomes a habit, and then it's too late. What happened to you, my son, when you were arrested?" asked Mr. Wu, chuckling.

Eddie looked sheepish. "My father did not speak to me for two months. He took away all my playthings. I was not allowed to leave the house after school hours. No games, no fun, nothing. My friends all laughed at me. I was very unhappy."

"All Chinatown felt the disgrace," added Mr. Wu. "We lost much face with our American friends and neighbors who set us such a fine example by their good manners—and efficient police."

I thanked him for the well-meant compliment.

"Good manners begin in the home," said Mr. Wu. "If a child will not obey his parents, certainly he will not obey his neighbors nor take advice from his friends. We Chinese are very harsh with our children when they are young."

Yet strict as is their discipline, I have been unable to find a single police-court record of Chinese parents being charged with cruelty to children. And I pointed out that fact to Mr. Wu.

"And yet," he said, "I know a man who once had his son arrested. The boy was fourteen and wearing his first long trousers. He considered himself a man, which was his mistake. He went to a pool hall. Very bad. He was a minor, and it is against the law. His father saw him and found a policeman.

"'Please arrest my son,' he said. 'A flower planted among weeds does not blossom. Quickly let him see the error of his ways, and his unbecoming immodesty in thinking himself a grown man just because he wears long pants.'

"And the policeman did arrest the son," continued Mr. Wu, "and took him to jail. But the father lingered around the corner for a time and then appeared and bailed the son out. The case was dismissed, of course. But the son was made to go to work and pay back to his father penny for penny the amount of the bail."

"Which the father kept?" I asked.

Mr. Wu looked shocked. "Oh, no. It was put into a special savings account, so when the son was old enough to go to college, he would have just that much more to spend. But that is not the point—nor the moral. It was

## NUMBER ONE BAD BOY

the lesson the son was taught that made a man out of him—long pants or no long pants!”

“It is quite true what my father says,” said Eddie. “The respect for the parent that originates in the home is carried on through in school, our games, and our behavior in public.”

That is why the Chinese children respect the law, and the police in Chinatowns throughout the country have little or no trouble with juvenile delinquency among the Chinese.

Yet despite all this, in 1936 there was one child arrested in New York. When I asked Mr. Wu about this he shook his head sadly.

“Most unfortunate,” he said. “The boy was only six. His father had not properly instructed him. While playing on a roof, the boy threw a brick. It broke the window of a barber shop.”

The proprietor, being human, wanted the window repaired, and to make certain this was done, had the boy arrested. The father, of course, paid all the damages. And the case, so far as the police were concerned, was closed.

Yet not quite. For the father had to do something to save his face.

It was a surprised barber the next week when fifty Chinese from all parts of the city came to his shop seeking haircuts whether they needed them or not. These were the father’s cousins, members of his family clan. He paid the bill himself.

But he saved his face.

So did Chinatown.

One day, not long after my conversation with Mr.

Wu, I was in Chinatown rambling along the street. Up came young Quan-Ling.

Quite soberly he asked me, "When Eddie Wu was my age he was famous for being Number One Bad Boy. But now he is grown up. Who do you think is Number One Bad Boy in Chinatown today?"

Thinking to tease him, I said, "You are!"

"Hurrah!" he shouted, and beaming scampered away.

Farther down the block I ran into little Ling-Yung.

He, too, faced me soberly and asked, "Do you think I am Number One Bad Boy today in Chinatown?"

"I certainly do!" I replied.

"Okay!" he smiled back, happy. "Hurrah!"

And on another block I met Kuo-Fang.

The same question. The same answer. And the same "Hurrah!" I had pleased them all. It gave me a great deal of pleasure in knowing, for once, that I had been polite and had said the correct thing.

I was starting home that afternoon when coming down the street toward me, side by side, solemn and foreboding, were Quan-Ling, Ling-Yung, and Kuo-Fang. They barred my way.

Then Kuo-Fang, being the eldest, said accusingly, "Each one of us three has asked you separately if he was Number One Bad Boy in Chinatown. To each one of us three you said he was. Now we can't all be Number One Bad Boy. So which is?"

It was a plot against me. An obvious plot. I was in a tough spot. I had wanted to please them all, and I hadn't succeeded in pleasing any one of the three. I was silent. I had lost much face. I was, to them, Number One liar.

## NUMBER ONE BAD BOY

"Let us go and have an ice-cream cone," I said, hoping to make amends.

So to the drugstore on the corner we trotted. We had our cones, and each boy selected a different flavor. Ling-Yung, being of an experimental turn of mind that day, tried to eat his cone with a couple of straws, which he used as if they were chopsticks. It took time, of course. The rest of us finished before he did.

"You are keeping us waiting," said Kuo-Fang.

Without a word Ling-Yung ducked out of the side door with his cone. He came back in a minute empty-handed.

"I am ready," he said.

As we left the store I saw the crushed remains of the cone lying in the gutter.

"Now," said Kuo-Fang, who wasn't going to let me get away that easy, "if I am Number One Bad Boy, Ling-Yung isn't. And if Ling-Yung is Number One Bad Boy, Quan-Ling can't very well be. One of us is—now which?"

I had to make a decision.

"Ling-Yung," I said.

"Why?"

"Because he is very polite. He has good manners. He does not keep his elders waiting."

"Hurrah!" they all shouted happily, and then we all shook hands.



## GRANDMA IS BOSS

.....

SHE rarely left her home and yet she ruled all of her family clan in Chinatown. When I first knew her she was over sixty years old; the mother of seven manly sons, the grandmother of nineteen boys and girls, and the great-grandmother of a tiny tot of three. By any standard she was a great woman. All Chinatown loved and respected her, and she had earned that love and respect.

What her given name was I never knew. For in Chinatown and in her own immediate family of thirty-three, over which she reigned supreme—sons, grandchildren, four wives of the sons and one wife of a grandchild, and husband, always in the background—she was always referred to simply as *Ah-Pau*. And that translated means “Grandmother.”

On only two formal occasions have I ever seen her in public. And on these rare excursions away from the shelter of her hearthstone she always dressed in Chinese style: high-necked, long-sleeved gowns of silk and satin; her black hair drawn tightly away from her high, intelligent forehead and gathered together in a knot at the back, in which she proudly wore seven gold pins. Each

pin, according to the custom of the village in China where her ancestors had bred and died for many generations, symbolized a son.

I saw her only once away from Chinatown and this was at a banquet given at the Hotel New Yorker for the visiting Chinese hero of the hour, General Tsai Ting-Kai. She sat enthroned at a table especially reserved for her, surrounded by her women friends, and all the men bowed respectfully to her. The jade she wore that night was wondrous to behold; rich, vivid, deep green, set in solid gold, alive and sparkling as jade should be when the wearer is at peace with the world. She carried herself nobly that night, like the matriarch she was; yet her smooth round face had a kindly look, there was a merry twinkle in her eyes, and she had a friendly smile for young and old alike. She was China Chinese.

At home, however, she cut quite a different figure. Clad in a loose-fitting American-made Mother Hubbard, onto which she had sewed countless pockets, she sat in a low comfortable chair, her slippered feet on a footstool, knitting sweaters all day long for her grandchildren. She loved babies. According to her there never was, and never could be, enough babies in the world. Babies and more babies, she sat surrounded by them, tweaking this one's ear, spanking that one, and adoring them all.

She sat there knitting day in and day out, giving advice, dispensing justice, straightening out quarrels, scolding when necessary, and praising when praise was due. In a little silk embroidered purse she kept tucked away among the cushions was always money. Sometimes

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

she'd pull out a nickel or a dime and tell one of her grandchildren to go buy an ice-cream cone. Sometimes she'd take out \$10 or \$20 and make a loan to someone who needed help at the moment. She gave freely to charity from that purse. And it apparently had no bottom. Always there was money in it. I think at nights she must have slept with it under her pillow.

She decided when her sons should be married, and to whom. Her word in all matters was final. Even grandfather obeyed her—that is, when he was home and awake. Well, why not? He had grown tired of giving orders for a lifetime. Let Ah-Pau boss now. She enjoyed it—and had earned the right. So obedience was hers, and she never overstepped into selfish dictatorship. Nor was she ever arrogant.

She had married when a young girl, and the first years of her adult life were given over to bearing children. She was as fertile as mother earth herself, and as one strong handsome son after another sprang from her rich womb, she tucked another gold pin into her hair and smiled happily. When she was forty and the seventh son appeared, she felt she had done her duty, had given her husband great face, had made him respected among his fellow men, and had done her share toward an investment of a happy old age, so she said quite briefly, "No more!" From now on there would be grandchildren to make life complete and whole.

Besides bearing children she had run the household. She had fed and washed the babies. She had kept the home neat and clean. She hadn't interfered with her husband's business. She had remained home and had done her duty as a wife and mother should. And with

each son, her prestige rose. She was China Chinese, as I have said, and believed in the precepts of *San Tsung*, as set forth by Confucius. Summed up briefly, these are that woman's place is in the home. She believed that and found joy in the doing. And by the time she was forty she had proved by her example that she was entitled to sit enthroned in her chair, knit sweaters for the babies, and continue to rule the household. But now she had others to wait upon her—the wives of her sons—and she could well accept sitting back gracefully and ruling. Her sons had been raised properly. They were respected in Chinatown, and doing well in business. And since they were respected, so was she.

Being old China, she thoroughly disapproved of the modern notions some of her women friends began to have. They read too much. They absorbed too many American ideas. Some of them even dressed in American clothes and went shopping on the streets! She considered this immodest, and said so.

She was greatly shocked when the daughter of one of her old friends started out in business for herself and opened an antique shop. A woman in business—unheard of! A woman behind a counter bartering with customers, making sales, talking freely with any stranger who wandered into the shop was unthinkable. She sent for the young woman, and from the tales I've heard a stormy scene took place. But the younger woman was firm. So was Ah-Pau.

"Had your mother been alive!" stormed Ah-Pau.

"But this is America," replied the young woman. She was college bred and considered herself perfectly capa-

ble of taking care of herself. "Women are going into business, and making it profitable."

"Do you think because you are a woman you can make more sales?" asked Ah-Pau, with scorn and irony.

"I do. The novelty of a Chinese woman behind a counter will attract customers," was the answer.

"It's man's place to barter—and buy and sell. A woman should remain in the home and raise children. What about your sons?"

"They are in school. I send them off in the morning before opening my shop. I have hired help to take care of my home."

"How do you expect them to grow up to be worthy sons and comfort you in your old age if someone else trains them in good manners? Who will they learn to respect—hired help? Who will mend their clothes? Hired help—again, I suppose!" She advanced every argument, but in vain. The young woman was adamant.

"Your honorable mother would turn over in her grave!"

The young woman remained silent.

"The new generation has no respect for custom!"

"The new generation is entitled to make a living!" was the reply.

"Go—you are useless—you are pith of the bamboo!"

And the young woman went, and was thereupon in disgrace forever with Ah-Pau. Time went by. Not once did Ah-Pau ever mention that she had been crossed, that her will had been opposed. But did she keep up with the times? Did she really know the changes that were taking place in the world about her? Or was she

lost completely in her dreams and her adherence to the old ways and customs?

She did, however, have her own system of espionage, and she knew exactly what was happening in the little shop around the corner. Business was not good. Customers did not buy as rapidly as had been hoped. Reports of all this came to Ah-Pau's ears. And also rumors that the shop would soon be forced to close and her daughter's friend would lose the investment she had made.

Then it was that Ah-Pau decided upon action. She summoned her friends whom she could trust. She dipped into the silk embroidered purse, and drew out money. She pledged her friends to secrecy and gave them only so much each day. They descended upon the shop and began buying. Their purchases, jars of candied ginger, packages of gaily wrapped tea, curios by the score, they brought to Ah-Pau. And never even unwrapping the packages, Ah-Pau piled them high in a closet in her home.

Business began to pick up. Reports spread around that people were buying in the shop, and soon the young proprietress achieved the reputation of being a clever saleslady. And customers always go where the crowd goes. Ah-Pau kept on buying until the Chinese New Year, and then three of her sons, at her command, descended upon the store, their arms loaded with bundles, and returned to the young woman all the packages that Ah-Pau had bought. She also sent instructions that these should be sold at a profit, and the money received be given to charity. This was her Chinese revenge for the disobedience of the daughter of her old friend.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

But she never sent for her to come and visit again. That, she considered, no doubt, was the real punishment.

Of course doing things like that, when the news spread around, made Ah-Pau a beloved figure in Chinatown. Her sense of humor pleased everyone. She could be unforgiving, yet fair. And her reputation for wisdom spread. I think Chinatown derived a great deal of pleasure out of letting this old woman have her way.

There are many stories they tell about her, and the manner in which she ruled. Here's one, and whether or not you wish to believe it, is left entirely to your own discretion. But there was a crime committed some years ago in which a certain young Chinese of the family clan was involved.

He had, as may happen to anyone, been unfortunate in his selection of companions, and had become friendly with some members of another race whom he had met in a poolroom on the Bowery. And before he actually knew what had happened a crime was committed and he was one of the guilty parties.

Those connected with this outrage against law and order were all caught, but where was the Chinese youth? It's as hard to identify a lost Chinese as it is to find a needle in the proverbial haystack. To the police often all Chinese look alike. And no one in Chinatown, when asked, even knew of the existence of this certain youth.

"Where can we find him?" was the question.

"Who?"

When the name was given, a blank stare would fol-

## GRANDMA IS BOSS

low. "No such man by that name in Chinatown," was the answer.

So the police searched, asked questions—embarrassing questions—and all Chinatown lied. No one would



betray him. And it soon appeared that in this particular case justice would never be done.

Ah-Pau, knowing everything that went on, heard of this. She saw how the police were suspecting every Chinese they encountered—and she felt that all Chinatown was disgraced. She was proud of her own people, and wanted them to be respected. She summoned one of the leaders of Chinatown.

"Have the police been to see you?" she asked.

"Yes."



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"Did they inquire where they could find this blot on the honor of his ancestors?"

"Yes."

"Did you tell them?"

"No."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Yes."

"Then you deliberately told a falsehood to the police?"

"Yes. What would you have done?"

"The same thing," she replied honestly. "Send this young reed upon the waters to me. I want to talk with him."

And the young man did as he was told. He stood before her boldly, and dared to smile. She did not ask him to sit down. And she let him stand there a long time before she spoke.

"Are you the one the police are seeking?" was her first question.

He smiled boastingly and said, "But I'll never be caught."

Then she quietly and simply told him the truth. How all Chinatown felt the disgrace. How her people had lived in peace and friendliness among those who misunderstood and sometimes vilified them. How it was only loyalty to themselves and their own people that had made them lie to the police. How it was difficult, even under normal circumstances, for his friends and cousins to make an honest living.

She told him he was a disgrace to his family, to his friends, to his neighbors, to all Chinatown. Then she added, "Someone must take the blame for your mis-

deed. It is the only way to save Chinatown's face. I shall select a brave man, someone who will be willing to take the blame and stop these incessant visits of the question-asking police to Chinatown. I shall let all Chinatown know who it is I have chosen, and why. Henceforth when you go about the streets, everybody in Chinatown will know. The police never. You will be safe and unmolested. But who in Chinatown will do business with you? Who in Chinatown will ever respect you again? Go—you are as weak as the marsh grass that bends in every breeze."

The young man made no comment, but took his departure.

Later that same afternoon four of his friends visited him.

"Come with us," they said, and they led him into a restaurant. Dinner was ordered and eaten as if nothing had ever happened. But at the conclusion of the meal, chopsticks were laid aside, and the eldest one present said, "Ah-Pau has said that one of us must accept for you the punishment that should be yours. All evening, and into the night, and until the first ray of the rising sun strikes the tallest building we shall play poker. In the morning the heaviest loser will go to the police station and confess to your crime."

They rose solemnly, shook hands in the approved American fashion as if sealing a bargain, bowed politely and left him with the check for the dinner.

An hour later he appeared at the police station and made his confession. It so happened that all the time he was serving his sentence, Ah-Pau sent him cigarettes occasionally and now and then a little spending money;

nor did she forget him with small gifts on the Chinese New Year, either.

But when he was ultimately released, with time off for good behavior, he went to pay his respects to Ah-Pau. She solemnly presented him with a list of the expenditures she had made for him while he was in prison. And he paid her back, every cent—with interest. Which money, as usual, she gave to charity.

His four friends, who might have gone to prison in his place, gave him four banquets, and paid the checks themselves. It was their acknowledgment of their debt to him. And the last I heard of this young man was a hint to the effect that Ah-Pau, now that he is working and saving money, is looking about to find him a suitable wife. She will, too. Trust her.

Being old China, and also proud of her family, it never occurred to her that there was any other way of living than to have her sons and their families under the parental roof. So as each son was married he brought his bride home to live with father and mother. Four married sons, a fifth family counting the married grandson. When I knew them they occupied a whole floor in an apartment building in Chinatown.

In the sunniest rooms overlooking the street where she could see what was going on lived Ah-Pau. Here was the center, the heart and life stream of this family, the throne room of her dynasty. And from this room Ah-Pau dictated to the daughters-in-law, and instructed them in the raising of babies and the management of their households.

But one of the daughters-in-law one day rebelled. She was used to American ways, had many American

friends with whom she often visited, and rose up in arms against this communal living under one roof. She was a little tired of having to ask permission of mother-in-law when she wanted to go shopping. She was a little tired of being told how to raise her children. So she packed up, found an apartment of her own farther down the street, and moved—bag and baggage.

I was told there was no stormy scene, no words of warning, no scoldings of any sort. Ah-Pau kept on quietly knitting. She never even discussed the matter. It was as if it were a chapter forever closed. It was almost as if she had given a silent consent to the rebellious daughter-in-law, and with it her blessing and the hope she'd make the most of her new freedom.

And for a time the daughter-in-law did. Her home was a model of propriety. Her children were being raised according to the best Chinese standards and traditions. They were well mannered, well behaved, and it was a happy household.

The daughter-in-law, when the children were in school, found time to go shopping. She went about the streets quite freely. She even took excursions uptown and saw the "foreign quarters" of Rockefeller Center and Central Park. Of course Ah-Pau heard of this. But she still said nothing, never voiced a disapproval if she had one. She maintained a rigid silence.

Quite naturally the grandchildren would come to visit her occasionally. They'd receive a pat on the head and be sent on home. There would still be nickels and dimes for an ice-cream cone or a bag of candy, however. She played no favorites. And the grandchildren began to come more and more frequently. Ah-Pau, as

often as decorum and the occasion would permit, arranged for a party in her sunny rooms. There'd be toys to play with, refreshments served just as if it were a birthday or some special festival to be observed.

On these occasions the rebellious daughter-in-law would come and take the small children home, for Ah-Pau was of the opinion that children should not go through the streets alone after dusk had fallen. So every day almost, instead of playing at home the small sons would be at Ah-Pau's. And the daughter-in-law would have to go after them and gather up her family.

When she arrived the other daughters-in-law would be having a special treat of some sort—always so timed that when she appeared she would be bidden to join them—with what was left over.

No longer was she given family confidences. No longer did Ah-Pau ask her advice on various matters—the sort of advice with the answer already in hand before the questions were asked.

Nor did Ah-Pau ever inquire about the new home. She didn't seem the least bit interested. The old apartment down the hall was vacant. The rent had been paid, but no one had moved in since the recalcitrant daughter-in-law had moved out.

As time went on the daughter-in-law felt herself more and more of an outsider. She was treated exactly as if she were a nursemaid—a hired nursemaid come to take home to their parents some bubbling, laughing, happy children.

Even her husband could be found more often at his mother's in the evening when the day's work was done than at home. He would spend long hours chatting

with Ah-Pau, and sometimes remain for the midnight supper. The daughter-in-law was never invited.

Nor did any of the family ever come to visit her. Religiously they stayed away. She had her own home, it was true, but she was alone much of the time.

And finally came the day when she could stand this no longer. She packed up her household gods and moved back to the old apartment near Ah-Pau. Her return was greeted with an amused silence.

Only one thing was ever said, and this was some months later. It was during the course of a casual conversation that Ah-Pau made the statement, "A woman my age is entitled to have her entire family near her where she can serve them with love and attention. When you get to be as old as I am, you will understand."

"I don't know but what she is right," said the daughter-in-law, who told me this story. "It is easier to be at peace with your family and live with your relatives and like it, than to be alone among strangers."

She was amused at Ah-Pau's victory, and secretly pleased, I am certain. For now she had a definite goal in life, an ambition to achieve. When she reached Ah-Pau's age, perhaps she too could be a Number One boss.

One day Ah-Pau sent for me. And I went, of course. She was knitting assiduously when I entered the apartment. Present were two of the daughters-in-law who spoke English, and as usual at Ah-Pau's feet the babies were crawling about. Seated in a corner was Wah-Fu, her youngest son, a lad of about twenty at the time. He had the hang-dog air of one about to be punished, and I wondered what he had done. For Wah-Fu was one of

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

the best mannered youths at the gym class. He was a slender, modest lad, straight as an arrow with a direct, honest glance in his dark eyes. I hadn't known him very well, as he had always held himself somewhat aloof.

The daughter-in-law informed me that Ah-Pau didn't understand one word of English. Whether or not this was true, I don't know—but I have my doubts. But I do know that many of the elders of Chinatown, growing old and indifferent and no longer forced to do business with Americans, speak only Chinese, and don't bother any more with the intricacies of our confused speech. Then, too, to pretend not to understand English often makes the stranger speak his mind openly and directly without any subterfuges.

And so Ah-Pau spoke to me only in Chinese. While she had greeted me with a smile when I came in, never once again did she look at me, but kept on knitting and talking. I admired her fine, high forehead, her gentle smile, her half-closed, sleepy eyes, yet I knew she was observing me from the corner of them and coming to her own conclusions. I was being studied, surely but subtly, and without rude observation. Whether or not she approved or disapproved of me, I never knew. She probably accepted me as a friend of the family and let it go at that. But I was a foreigner, with strange, outlandish, barbarous ways—and our customs and manners were thousands of miles apart. But today that was forgotten, for she had use of me. She knitted as she talked, and the daughter-in-law translated.

"Ah-Pau wants to know if you ever go to foreign restaurants to dine," she said, and then laughingly

added, "She doesn't mean Chinese chop-suey joints, but American."

"Like night clubs, hot spots, and hideouts, where the gangsters sometimes shoot themselves and each other," put in Wah-Fu eagerly.

"I've been known to," I replied modestly.

Then followed some more Chinese, and the daughter-in-law turned to me.

"Wah-Fu is growing up," she said. "Soon he'll be going to a college uptown. He is becoming restless. His blood is hot. He is curious. One of these days he will meet companions at college. They will tell him many things he does not yet know. Ah-Pau wishes him to be prepared, so he will not seem to them an ignorant country lad with gaping mouth and astonished eyes. She wants you to take him out and instruct him in the American ways of the world."

The point was, as I gathered, that I had been selected, after due consideration, to lead Wah-Fu astray.

"His elder brothers," continued the daughter-in-law, "had to find out for themselves. But Wah-Fu is modest and shy, and Ah-Pau does not think he should go alone to these various places that have aroused his curiosity. It is perfectly all right. His father has given his consent."

His father? It was Ah-Pau's idea. I wasn't to be fooled as easily as that.

I protested. I offered excuses. I tried my best to get out of it. But Ah-Pau was firm.

"She says she can trust you to do the proper thing," said the daughter-in-law.

At that moment, Ah-Pau picked up one of the babies,



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

gently spanked it, and sat it down on the floor again. Then she looked at me, and smiled. I understood what she meant, so I reluctantly consented.

A date was set, and I started out on a career of crime with shy Wah-Fu. I met him early one evening and off we went. He was eager and enthusiastic, and his eyes were dancing with anticipation. I had previously made inquiries of a taxi driver in my neighborhood as to where the worst joints in town could be found, and several notorious places had been recommended.

We visited a cheap dance hall, a bawdy night club, and a dirty, noisy saloon, where Wah-Fu had his first beer. He didn't like it, he confessed afterwards. We didn't go to all these places the same evening, however. We exhausted the forbidden pleasures of each, one at a time. I won't go into details. But we weren't arrested for disorderly conduct.

Still we were talked about in every place we visited. That was because Wah-Fu never once budged from his chair, not even in the dance hall. He was a silent on-looker, not a participant. Calm and seemingly indifferent, with an impassive, expressionless face, he didn't miss a thing that went on. He saw "life"—but he didn't sample it.

It was three of the dullerest evenings I have ever spent, but Wah-Fu had an exciting time. His curiosity was satisfied, and from what he saw of American wickedness, he wasn't tempted to indulge. It didn't appeal to his sense of humor. I have often wondered when he went to college and his American friends told him tales if Wah-Fu confessed to the three evenings in which he

had recklessly sowed wild oats, or if he remained silent and smiled knowingly. I'll wager the latter.

As my reward for leading her son astray, Ah-Pau sent me a bottle of old Chinese liqueur. It was a choice bottle that had come gaily through the customs even during the Prohibition Era, because it was marked "Medicinal. Good for rheumatism. Apply externally—as well as internally."

Wah-Fu told me that he had described in detail to his mother everything he had seen. She must have derived a great deal of vicarious pleasure out of this, and I am certain her curiosity was aroused. She must have wondered often about this New York in which she lived, but never saw save from the window of her apartment that overlooked the street, with the towers of Manhattan in the distance, and over there on the horizon the ever-restless bay of a great harbor. Then one day she, too, had an adventure.

It was the evening of her first visit to uptown New York on the night of the banquet for General Tsai Ting-Kai. She sat at a table surrounded by her daughters-in-law and her best women friends. But she didn't eat a thing, for the array of knives and forks puzzled her, and she wasn't used to dining American style. She sat and smiled and let the others struggle with the unaccustomed implements. But all during dinner an idea must have been forming in the back of her mind. She had come this far away from home, and there was no time like the present.

When the banquet broke up, she gave her command. Together with two of her daughters-in-law—the Chinese wives who didn't speak English—and Wah-Fu, who

knew all about New York, and could act as interpreter, she summoned a taxi. She knew her husband and her married sons would probably voice an objection had they known. So she sent word to them after the taxi had dashed away.

Then for three hours she went about seeing New York. Up Broadway the taxi sped, Ah-Pau gazing serenely out of the window. Through the crowds on Times Square it wended its way. Up to Central Park—around the Park—then down Fifth Avenue and back again on Broadway. Then to Seventy-second Street and up Riverside Drive and through dusky Harlem. Back again down Fifth Avenue to Washington Square, and then through the deserted financial section of Wall Street to the Battery, and then—long after midnight—back home again to Chinatown.

She climbed the stairs to her ivory tower, said not a single word to her anxiously waiting husband and sons, and so to bed. Grandma, to put it vulgarly, had had her fling.

Forever after she was satisfied. She knew now what they meant when they talked of uptown New York. The next day she was back again at her knitting.

And there she sits, stubborn old China, never leaving her apartment, knitting sweaters for the babies, and bossing all Chinatown. But she is happy, for the world is at her feet—her world—and what greater fulfillment can any woman have?

## BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

.....

THERE are two Chinatowns: one seen from the outside by the tourists and sightseers, the other unseen, the Chinatown that exists behind closed doors and shuttered windows.

On the surface Chinatown is a place of strange odors, of exotic foods piled high in shop windows, of joss sticks, of cheap souvenirs, of softly murmuring Orientals standing about in groups seemingly doing nothing at all, of waiters from restaurants carrying trays of food on their heads up winding flights of stairways, of fantastic sights and sounds.

This is the Chinatown seen by the tourists. Usually late in the afternoon and during the evening bus loads of them descend upon this part of the town, arm in arm, fearful of the weird tales they have heard, yet eagerly expectant of a thrill of some sort. And the guides, knowing their business, do all they can to help along this fiction, and gathering their timid sheep about them, whisper in subdued tones about the murders that have taken place on this corner or in that building. They tell strange tales of mysterious poisonings and sagas of Oriental cruelty and mayhem, and

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

implant in their hearers' minds legends of Chinese cunning and revenge. No wonder the old lady from Omaha and the young bridal couple from Kalamazoo quaver in their boots, cling closer to each other, wind



their way through the streets in terror, and return home to add a detail or two to the stories, spreading the impression.

"Come a little closer," whispers the guide.

His charges, with backward glances, step into the circle, and hear a colorful tale about the secret passageway at the other end of that doorway over there.

The only secret passage in New York's Chinatown that I know about is through the back door of a certain

restaurant. It leads down a busy hallway and out onto the street on the other side. A very handy exit, from which to escape a noisy group of tourists.

Strange as it may seem, the Chinese do not object to this sort of thing. With their peculiar sense of humor, they view with amusement the tales told—sometimes stop to listen and learn something new from the guides, and with their impassive faces, strike an added note of terror to the believing ears of the out-of-towner, before they slip away grinning. They never complain.

The only comment I've ever heard was one made by a Chinese friend. We were viewing a group of sight-seers who were standing gaping in open-mouthed wonder, when he said, "Some day I hope you will go to China. I shall give you letters to my family and friends. And you will live with them in their homes. And some day you, too, will go sightseeing."

"Certainly," I replied. "I should like to see China."

"Yes," he answered soberly, "you will go to the Foreign Quarters, the British, French, and American Concessions—peek into their homes, rubber-neck on their doorsteps, ask questions about their strange customs, and have a lot of fun seeing how the other half lives."

Confucius might have had an answer to that. I didn't.

The most violent objection to the tales the guides in Chinatown tell came one hot summer night from—of all people—a policeman.

"Hey, you!" he cried angrily to a perspiring guide, "lay off that nonsense, and tell 'em the truth!"

And by the truth he meant the other side of Chinatown—the real Chinatown and the life that goes on behind closed doors. Were one to intrude upon the pri-

vacy found there you would find many women like Ah-Pau, for example; here and there a college boy or girl intent upon his studies; you might find an old Chinese scholar busy unfolding his scrolls or reading again the sayings of the Chinese philosophers; you might find an anxious mother bending over the cot of her sick child; you might find a grandfather instructing his children in good manners. You would find, I know, the sane and sensible home life of a hard-working people—the same sort of well-ordered, well-balanced home life that lies behind the closed doors of any Middle Western family. But then that's the Chinatown the tourists never see.

And that's the Chinatown I like best. Chinatown in the early morning, for example, when the sightseers aren't around. That time of day when the Chinese merchants unlock the doors of their shops, after first stopping to read the bulletin board where the news of the day is posted. These bulletin boards are on the walls of buildings, and contain everything the well-informed Chinese should know; political news abroad and at home, who has just opened a new laundry and where, and sometimes a friendly, neighborhood bit of gossip. After opening the store and seeing that everything is in readiness for the business of the day, and the clerks all on hand, the merchants go about town, visiting their friends, and taking the affairs of the day as they come.

Huge trucks pound along the pavement and stop alongside the restaurants with fresh vegetables from the Chinese farms in the outlying districts.

Just before the clock strikes nine there's the patter

of children's feet as they dash off to school. Mother is left alone at home to attend to the household, while father, his courtesy calls made for the day, returns to his place of business.

The time to make a purchase in Chinatown—to get that best price for the porcelain vase or the antique for the living room—is in the morning. You will find the Chinese merchant then the most amiable, and most willing to make the proper reduction from the marked price.

Once I was admiring a beautiful carved teakwood statue.

"How much?" I asked.

"For anybody else, \$20," was the reply. "But for my friends I make a special price of only \$35!"

I put the statue back on the shelf.

"I gather you don't wish to make a sale this morning," I said.

"Not particularly. I'd rather talk. The morning is yet young. If I let you have the statue for the marked price you might buy it and walk out. So I made the price higher, but the more we talk, the more I see the error of my ways, and after a couple of hours I may relent and let you have the statue for a very special price of only \$12.50. What's your hurry?"

So we sat and talked, and it ended by his giving me the statue as a gift.

Not unlike another merchant who has a flourishing antique shop. One day he pulled out a jade ring, and told me to put it on. I did, and it fitted perfectly.

"This ring," he said, "will act as a guide to your health—such is the quality of jade. When you are feel-



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

ing fresh and fit, it will sparkle and glow with life. But when you are working too hard, it will grow dull and lusterless. When that happens stop work, and rest."

And, believe it or not, what he said was true. The ring has become for me something of a barometer for my good health. When I am feeling in fine fettle, the jade fairly shines. When I am tired, and my spirits are low, I look at the ring, and if the sparkle has gone from the jade, I quit and rest.

But he didn't give me the ring. He said when I first put it on to wear it for a year. So exactly on the same day one year later I went back to return to him the ring.

"Has it brought you good luck?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed," I truthfully told him.

"Then keep it another year, please," he smiled in reply.

Every year on that day I go back—and every time he tells me to wear it for yet another year.

"I am certain as long as you wear that jade ring," he once said, "you will come to visit me at least once every twelfth moon."

When it comes to doing business, my Chinese friends have none of our obnoxious "high-pressure salesmanship." And the face-saving philosophy of the Chinese is at its practical best when it comes to buying and selling.

Eddie Wu, who manages his father's importing business, showed me one day how it all worked. Down the street Wong had a retail store and handled among other commodities, candied ginger. Now a representa-

## BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

tive, labeled as such, from Eddie's company, does not visit Wong with samples in a black leather suitcase, and cause Wong indigestion by making him taste the various sorts of ginger Eddie has for sale.

Instead a friend of both parties enters into the transaction. This friend, call him Sing, incidentally will get a cut if a sale is made. So Sing goes to see Wong with no other purpose than a friendly visit.

The two of them sit down, sip tea, and gossip for an hour or so. They talk about everything in the world, save the all-important topic, candied ginger. But just before Sing leaves he drops a hint to Wong that he has just called upon Eddie Wu. His business is flourishing. He has many, many customers, and they are all satisfied. He also tells Wong that Eddie has just had a fresh shipment of candied ginger come in from China.

"Delicious ginger," says Sing. "I know. I tasted some of it. The sweetness of roses, and hot like melted fire. A perfect blend."

This is Wong's cue. If he is in need of ginger he asks, quite innocently, "I hope he is making a fine profit?"

"No," replies Sing, "not to his friends. He wants them to share with him this fine quality of fresh ginger. He is even willing to make a sacrifice so that they may profit. Of course, to strangers—the ginger is very, very expensive."

"What is he asking?"

Sing says he thinks he sold two large crates to such-and-such a store for, say, fifteen cents a single package.

"That's more than I've been paying," replies Wong.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"I got my last purchase of three crates for only twelve cents a single package."

"You were very lucky!" says Sing. "Good-by, good-by."

And back he trots to Eddie Wu with the report that Wong will pay twelve cents. If the price is agreeable to Eddie, the ginger arrives at Wong's place that afternoon with a bill sent later.

But if Eddie doesn't want to sell at that price he sends another friend around to Wong, who sits and gossips and drinks tea, and in a roundabout way informs Wong that Eddie Wu is getting thirteen and a half cents a package for ginger. Then Wong either admits that that is a fair price, or makes the remark that he is well stocked up with ginger, but when he needs some he will certainly get in touch with his good friend Eddie Wu.

Should that day come he will send a friend of his around to see Eddie Wu. And this friend will tell Eddie, after a cup of tea and a round of gossip, that Wong is contemplating buying some ginger for eleven cents a package.

If Eddie doesn't like that price he sends a friend around to Wong who politely informs Wong that Eddie's ginger is in such great demand that he is now getting fourteen cents a package.

So back and forth the gossiping friends go. It takes time. But it is worth it. Imagine how embarrassing it would be for Eddie to ask Wong to buy some of his ginger and be turned down. Wong, too, would feel unhappy about having to say "No" to Eddie. They would both lose face. And perhaps the next time they meet,

because of the refusal, a restraint might arise between them. But with the unobnoxious middleman—the gossiping friend—they have all had a good time, and no bad feelings can possibly arise.

So when Eddie Wu and Wong meet on the street or at a banquet they chat about everything under the sun and no mention of a business deal is made between them.

Thus the Chinese merchants take their time. For long hours on a sunny morning they sit in front of their shops, fanning themselves on hot days—and spending more time gossiping and visiting with their friends than they do arguing over sales and battling over prices.

A visit to a Chinese merchant or a businessman partakes of the nature of a social call. They are never too hurried to stop and chat. But should the affairs of the day be pressing they know how to bring the interview gracefully to a close and without offending the visitor.

When you are paying a visit the Chinese have the art of leave-taking down to an exact science. In the first place a Chinese invites you into his home not because he wishes to spend the evening amusing you, but because he wishes you to amuse him. The guest and not the host is expected to furnish the entertainment. And when the host has had enough, it is he who gives the signal that it is now time for his guest to depart.

It is very simple. When you first appear a cup of tea is offered, the cup of hospitality. Conversation swoops along, and time flies. But at length comes that moment when the host has enjoyed the visit of his guest. Now he wishes to go back to his books, or perhaps take a nap.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

He smiles politely and says, "Do have another cup of tea before you go?"

One more cup is enjoyed, and then the guest takes his departure.

This method is even carried over into their shops and places of business. Always in every store stands a tea-cosy. When the merchant has felt you have talked long enough he politely offers you a cup of tea, and the interview is over. This method is so much more gracious than fumbling with pencils and papers on the desk, rising, or pulling open a drawer. And visitors, properly trained in Chinese good manners, have "another cup of tea," and take their leave, and nobody's feelings are hurt.

And so I like our Chinatowns in this country. They are quiet, restful, and peaceful. On days now and then when everything goes wrong for me, and I have an attack of the jitters, I remember the Chinese saying, "To be entirely at leisure for one day is for one day to be an immortal."

Then I flee to Chinatown. I turn from the rush of our city streets, I leave behind the hurry and the scurry, and enter another world where the pace of life is slower. Of necessity I amble along leisurely. Everybody else does in Chinatown. And after an hour or so, sitting quietly in one of their teashops, my tired nerves straighten out, the pressing necessity of the moment seems unimportant, and a new and fresh perspective takes its place.

The Chinese find no need to hurry as we do. Why should they? Tomorrow will always come. And a cul-

## BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

ture that has endured for some thousands of years will survive another hundred years at least—even in this twentieth century with bombs falling all around us.

From a newspaper clipping of May, 1939, I read in the column of James W. Barton, M.D., that a physician who had lived in China said he had found the blood pressure of the Chinese much lower than among the people of the United States. "What does this mean?" he says. "This means that the manner of living in China—no hurry, acceptance of circumstances as they arise, no intense competition—keeps the blood pressure from rising beyond normal limits. The lesson for us is not to lose our ambition or our competitive spirit, but to try to acquire some of the calmness of spirit of the peoples of these other countries."

You may have heard the story of the American businessmen who were showing New York to a merchant from China. They saw the skyscrapers, they rushed up and down in elevators, they dodged taxis on Fifth Avenue, they dashed into the subway. They pushed and they shoved, and no sooner had they found a place than they said to the Chinese merchant, "Come on. Hurry. We get out here. Catch an express."

"Why?" asked the merchant, breathless.

"Faster!"

"We've been going fast," he demurred.

"Yes—but we save five minutes."

"Five minutes," mused the Chinese. "H'm. What are you going to do with them?"

That's how the Chinese feel about it. And I often ask myself—when time seems to be pressing, and I run to grab at something at the end of that elusive rainbow

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

—save five minutes— “But what am I going to do with them?” The answer comes from my observation of my Chinese friends. Five minutes at my disposal. I do nothing at all with them. Nor does Chinatown.

One evening as I walked into Chinatown I passed a shop where two old men sat in the doorway. I had never met them before.

As I passed by, one of them said, “*Fon qua low, fie nee.*” Translated that means, “Foreign blue-eyed devil man in a hurry.”

I immediately slowed down, bowed pleasantly, and replied, “*Ho la ma, hong yin,*” which means, “How are you, men of China?”

They smiled in return, and that was that, I thought.

Later that night I had dinner in a favorite Chinese restaurant. But when I came to pay my bill, the cashier informed me it had already been taken care of.

“By whom?” I asked in amazement.

“Your two foreign devil friends up the street,” was the answer. “And they hoped you would not hurry out of Chinatown as fast as you hurried in!”

## BABY'S FIRST HAIRCUT

.....

WE WERE invited—my wife and I—to the *Kwot-how*, given by one of my friends. This is the baby's first haircut, corresponding to our christening.

I had been prepared for this event, even before the baby arrived.

One day my friend Jung said to me, "I am expecting a son and heir at my house."

I offered him the proper congratulations.

But his face was long. "I don't know what to name the baby," he said.

He meant by that an American given name, for the Chinese name was already fixed by custom. And finding suitable American names for Chinese babies is, I've been told, something of a problem. It wouldn't be done at all, but the teachers in our public schools have requested it.

There had been too much confusion in the early days about how to address a Chinese child. And the Chinese enjoyed adding to the confusion. For example, suppose a child's name on the school records was Chu Li Tsang.



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"Will you please tell your father, Mr. Tsang—" the uninitiated teacher would say.

"But I have no father by the name of Tsang," would be the reply.

"But it says here—"

"That's my name, not my father's."

"Then what is your father's name?"

"Chu!"

"But that's your name, not your father's."

"My name is Li Tsang. My father's name is Chu," would be the stubborn reply.

"Then why don't you call yourself Li Tsang Chu?"

"Because my father's name is not Li, and my name is not Tsang Chu!"

By that time the teacher would be ready to give up in despair. It was all too complex, when it really is very simple. The Chinese always put their family name first. In their way of looking at things, the family is more important than the individual. Hence, first your family name, and then your given name. It is as if, say, your name was John Paul Jones, according to our American custom. But in China your name would be Jones John-Paul. Lin Yutang should be addressed as Mr. Lin, not as Mr. Yutang.

Consequently, because of this cart-before-the-horse method of names, our schools asked that a Chinese child be given an American first name, and if he didn't have one, a name was supplied him. So while attending school Chu Li Tsang became simple Tommy Chu, or Harry Chu. Even then the confusion was not wholly overcome. For if one child with the family name of Chu took as his American name "Tommy," half a

## BABY'S FIRST HAIRCUT

dozen other Chus did likewise, and often the bewildered teacher in a public school with Chinese pupils had an odd assortment of Tommy Chus and never did know, sometimes, which was which.

And when she might send for Tommy Chu to come to her office after school, the question would be asked, "Fat Tommy Chu or lean Tommy Chu?"

And if she designated "Fat Tommy," ten to one "Lean Tommy" would appear, and the game would go on.

So Chinese fathers usually give their sons an American name and try to follow some sort of pattern in naming them, too. It doesn't matter a great deal, for after schooling is over, and unless the man is doing business with Americans, he invariably drops his American given name and is known henceforth by only his Chinese name.

My friend Jung was attempting to follow a pattern in naming his sons. The baby that was expected was to be his third. He had been married a whole year before his first-born arrived, and as he said to me one morning, "My father was beginning to be worried about me."

Then one day the Chinese stork—or dragon—or whatever it is that brings babies to a Chinese home—arrived in a blaze of glory with a son and heir. And Jung named him Alfred.

"I intend to please my father," he said. "I'm going straight through the alphabet."

The second son was named Byron, and now a third son was expected. What name should he be given?

As Jung said, "The next letter in the alphabet is 'C.'"

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

And the only American name beginning with 'C' that I happen to admire is Carl. I should like to name him Carl, but you might not approve."

"I should be highly honored if you did," I said.

"I should like to name him after you," said Jung, "but he will never be worthy of bearing the same name as yours."

"I am not worthy of having your son named after me."

"You will set him a good example."

"Alas, no," I said. "My sins are many, my behavior bad, and should he have me as an example and try to be like me, he'd have an unhappy life, always troubled with an uneasy conscience."

"Perhaps that's true. Should he grow up to be like you, a noble, self-sacrificing character, loaded down with virtues, he would miss a lot of fun in life."

"I would put him to shame—"

"He would put you to shame—"

This might have gone on forever, if another Chinese friend standing near hadn't said, "What the hell is this, a poetry contest?"

And both Jung and I laughed.

"Why don't you both save your breath," said our ironic friend, "and name the child 'Conversation.'" And being a realist, he added, "That's what you both enjoy—and all it amounts to at the moment, anyway. Suppose the baby turns out to be a girl?"

Since he was a bachelor, we let him have the last word.

But what he had said gave me a thought. And that evening when I got home I dropped Jung a note in

## BABY'S FIRST HAIRCUT

which I said, after thinking over the matter, it seemed to me that since neither the expectant son nor myself would be worthy of bearing the name, and if he did name the child after me, I would be forced to live an upright life, which would be difficult at my age, and the son would labor under a handicap, why not give him a really good name beginning with "C." And from a dictionary I selected a page of names such as Contemporaneous—contiguous—contumacy—contretemps—congener—contradistinct, and so forth.

Jung replied by note thanking me profusely and asking if he might borrow my dictionary, as he didn't know the meaning of those words, and suspected I didn't, either—or I wouldn't have been guilty of calling an innocent child such unpronounceable names. And he added, "If the baby does turn out to be a girl, we're both fooled!"

There the matter rested for the next few months. And then one day in October came a little card announcing briefly, "Carl has arrived safely!"

So I had a Chinese godson. But blessings never come singly in Chinatown. Another friend of mine had a baby boy born on the same day, and he, too, was named Carl.

So from that time on, with two godsons, I determined to set them both a good example. It was a more complete conversion than the three times I've been converted to Christianity—and even once baptized. This time it took. From now on I saw that I must set a good example to my Chinese godsons, whether they liked it or not. So after several futile attempts in my early

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

youth to force me into an upright, moral life, it was finally the Chinese who really reformed me.

We went to the *Kwot-how*, or the baby's first haircut. It occurs a month after the baby is born, and they don't really give him a haircut. It's just the thought behind it—now the baby is on his way to becoming a man and should have a haircut, even if he doesn't need one. It really is a party to introduce the child to his friends and relatives—sort of his official debut into this world.

When we arrived the baby was proudly displayed. Dressed in Chinese clothes, and on his head a cap literally covered with gold ornaments and jade and gold beads, gifts of friends and relatives. These ornaments, made of thin, beaten gold, represent good luck. Some were figures of old Chinese gods, others solid gold coins. The cap belonged to Jung's family and had been worn by each of his sons in turn—only, however, on special occasions such as this. For as each son was born, more gold ornaments were sewed onto the cap. It was very valuable and, when not in use, was kept safely in a strong-box. It was a cap that signified protection to children.

The young son was duly admired, his future predicted from an ancient book on Chinese astrology; and good wishes for a long life, good health, happiness, and prosperity—and the fifth blessing, many sons for his old age—were wished. Here in his tiny cradle lay the future hope of the world—and we all drank to him saying, "May he be a better man than his father."

For as Jung said to me, "Unless our sons emulate our virtues and not our vices, and each generation faces

## BABY'S FIRST HAIRCUT

life with more courage and lives with more joy in his heart, what chance is there for the ways of man to improve?"

And then the baby was put to bed, and the party commenced. It really wasn't the baby's party at all. It was his father's. For it was his triumph, and this was the occasion on which his son became a man among men. And now that the young son was asleep it was time to honor the proud father.

Following the custom, the party was a banquet. Whenever the Chinese wish to celebrate they have a banquet. This night there were three tables set: one for the men, who ate together, another for the women, and a third for the children of the brothers of Jung. Only members of the family and closest friends were present tonight. Later Jung would give another banquet to introduce his son to his other friends and business associates.

It was something of a problem that night to know what to do with my wife. Should she sit with me at the table with the men in our American custom, or dine with the women? But a compromise was made and both customs observed. She was seated at the table with the men and with her were the grandmother and the wife of one of the brothers who spoke English.

Grandfather was master of ceremonies. As dish after dish in true banquet style was brought on, he would first, with his chopsticks, select a choice morsel and drop it in his son's rice bowl. He was entitled to the first mouthful now that he was a father and an elder.

And as each dish was brought on we toasted his good health in Chinese liqueur. Each one of us in turn

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

drank with the son—and he bore up nobly under the deluge of drinks and the many, overwhelming compliments.

At the conclusion of the meal, red eggs were brought in, sweet ginger, and a dish served only at times like this, *jung-cho*, chicken gizzards and liver cooked in spiced wine. Stuffed with food as we were, for the banquet had lasted for four hours, we all religiously broke and ate one of the red eggs. For this was our way of wishing the son and the father all of the five blessings in life.

Then followed a short discourse by the grandfather on the responsibilities of fatherhood and the proper way to bring up a son, with many quotations from Confucius. One in particular I remember, for it seems to sum up the Chinese attitude toward his moral obligations. It is, "When the heart is set right, then the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, then the family life is regulated; when the family life is regulated, then the national life is orderly; and when the national life is orderly, then there is peace in this world."

With that as the ultimate goal, my friend Jung—as becomes all good Chinese fathers—will raise his young son.

## A SCHOLAR LIKE MY FATHER

.....

FOR the first four to six years a Chinese child is petted and coddled by everyone concerned: parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and friends of the family. Everything possible is done to make the baby happy. The Chinese believe that because this is a sad world, with tears more plentiful than laughter, a child should start upon his journey through life smiling. It's the first impression that counts. Let the baby know in his earliest years that life is gay and pleasant, and ten to one, despite the handicaps of ill fortune, he'll go through the years of his manhood with unflinching courage, and at the end again find peace and have memories of some stray bright bits of laughter.

As Mr. Wu said to me, "Childhood is the happiest time of a man's life. That and old age, when the storm and stress are over, and a man has five or more sons to support him. Then he may settle down with philosophic detachment to view this humorous existence. So the parents do all they can to make their children happy, and the children and grandchildren, remembering a happy childhood, do all they can to make their parents happy."



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

Youth and old age—the two happiest times of a man's life. Or at least they should be, so reason the Chinese.

And believing this there are no repressions for a baby. Certainly I have never yet heard a Chinese father say, "Don't," to a very young child. Rather do they say, "Do!" It's always a positive statement such as, "Do this," or "Do that!" That, the Chinese believe, is the way to learn, the proper way to instruct a child; by positive action, not by negative retreat.

And they begin this instruction as soon as the baby is able to toddle about. It starts in the home. The father himself teaches and instructs his babies.

There is no father in the world so proud as a Chinese father. One sees more fathers with their babies on the streets of Chinatown than in any other part of the city. In Chinatown the mother may rock the cradle, but it's the father who gladly pushes the baby carriage.

Just as soon as the child is able to toddle, the father takes him to visit his friends and proudly displays his handiwork. And if he can walk down the street followed by three or four small sons—what a man! what a man!

It is a better investment against a lonely old age than money in an uncertain bank. Sons and more sons—and daughters, too—to honor me in my old age, just as I today honor my parents. That's the Chinese viewpoint.

There is nothing that gives a father more pleasure, more relaxation after a day's hard work, than to go home and play with his babies. Often when I have gone to Chinatown and in the shops or restaurants have inquired the whereabouts of one of my friends, the answer is, "Home playing with the baby." And up to the

house I go, join the proud father, sit on the floor, and play with the baby. It is, I suppose, nature's way. A kennel of puppies are treated that way, and kittens. So should it be with babies.

Admire a Chinese baby, and Chinatown is yours. Say to a Chinese father, "What a handsome son," and he beams with pleasure. This is his final answer to life, a son to carry on after he has gone, and not just another mouth to feed.

I've sometimes gone home with a red nose, ears that burn, and bleary eyes. And my wife always says, "You've been playing with the babies in Chinatown."

Quite true. They've pulled my nose until it's red, tweaked my ears until they are out of joint, and thrust their tiny fingers in my eyes until tears run down. But I like it, and go back for more.

The annual spring Baby Parade in Chinatown is something to see. Clad in all their finery, Chinese dress, silks and satins of pale green, blue, pink, red, and all the colors of the rainbow, with headdress of pearls and jade, smiling one minute and dignified and serene the next, the babies of Chinatown are on official display.

I was asked at one of these Baby Parades to act as judge, and select the best baby. I tactfully declined. What, face scores of proud fathers and then make the decision as to whose baby was the best? I should have to spend the rest of my life apologizing to the fathers whose babies didn't win a prize. It was impossible for me to make a decision, and I told them so. Far from being offended, they were pleased, I believe. After all they had honored me by asking me. I had politely declined and my excuse was understood. I was on hand,

of course, and admired every baby present with as much, if not more genuine enthusiasm, than any political candidate. And had I had a platform it would be simply, "More babies for Chinatown." I am always delighted when one of my friends gets married. That means, in a few years, more babies to play with. It will mean another red nose, too. But who cares?

Chinese children, however, are extremely shy with strangers. They are taught not to be too free with someone whom they do not know. And often a tiny tot has stood away from me and stared with a glazed indifference until the instruction comes from the father to step up and say, "Hello."

Once I was trying to make friends with a three-year-old. He drew back and hid behind his father's fat legs. Perhaps my face showed my disappointment, for to have a child frightened at your well-meaning, friendly advances is not the greatest compliment in the world.

Some words of Chinese were spoken. One of his little brothers, a boy about six, vanished for a few moments. He returned carrying an ice-cream cone which was handed to the baby brother. That was the reward, I thought, for fleeing from a foreign blue-eyed devil man. But no—the little one, having received instructions from the father, took a bite out of the cone, then toddled to me, and smiling offered me a bite, too. I accepted, and we have been friends ever since.

By the time the son is six years old, the petting and the coddling cease. Now is the time to train him to become a man. The days of babyhood are over. He has learned through those first years that his father is his best friend. And father has learned, too, to behave him-

self and set his son a good example. Father is not a stranger in the home, a man who appears only at odd times of the day to be fed and not be disturbed. And consequently the child looks to this best friend for instruction in good manners, Chinese customs, and the proper behavior toward friends and neighbors.

Training a Chinese child is not difficult, if he has been started right. From the very beginning respect for his elders is firmly planted in his life. It is even carried into the manner of addressing each other in the family circle.

The father is always addressed as "*Fu chun*," meaning "my elder father." Members of the same family do not address each other by their given names. Rather is it "Elder brother," or "*Ah-kwa*"—or "Younger brother, *Si-low*." Big sister is "*Ah-dee*," while Little sister is "*Ah-mui*." And so on for uncles, aunts, parents, and grandparents. The mere use of addressing each other in this manner implies respect, and places definitely each member of the family in his or her proper niche. It implies, too, something deeper, for no one can say "Elder brother," or "Elder sister," or "Younger brother," or "Younger sister," without presupposing a genuine love of those nearest to you.

It is the eldest present who always gives the command. It is the eldest who always is shown the greatest courtesy. It is the eldest who is always obeyed. It is the eldest who is honored. And in Chinese homes, the father—until such time as he lets grandmother take over—is always the eldest present, and consequently the one who is supreme head.

He is the one who teaches those younger. And as he

is wise, with the wisdom that comes from age, so are they wise, according to his instruction.

The Chinese all know what Confucius said about this: "There is no one who fails in teaching the members of his own family and yet is capable of teaching others outside his family. Therefore the superior man spreads his culture to the entire nation by merely remaining at home. The teaching of filial piety is a preparation for serving the rulers of the state; the teaching of respect to one's elder brother is a preparation for serving all the elders of the country; and the teaching of kindness in parents is a training for ruling over the people."

At Chinese dinners it is the father who first dips his chopsticks into the dishes and starts eating. The family and the children gathered around the table say to their parent, "*Sick la, fu chun*," which means, "Please eat, my elder father."

In China, I am told, at banquets the men are always served first. This has on some occasions for me given rise to embarrassment. Once in Chinatown with a party of American friends we were having dinner. The Chinese, knowing I admired their customs and manners and was trying to do things, however clumsily, in the Chinese manner, served me and the other men in the party first.

Thoughtless of Chinese etiquette I passed my plate to the lady at my right. I was caught between two fires: correct in our custom, but not in the Chinese manner. The waiter said nothing, didn't even bat an eye.

But the next time we were having dinner at the same place with the same waiter, as he served us, he

## A SCHOLAR LIKE MY FATHER

said softly in my ear, "Will you pardon me, if tonight I serve the ladies first?"

To this day I don't know whether he was complimenting me on my American display of good manners, or scolding me for not being more Chinese.

But this respect for the elder makes obedience easy in Chinatown. It makes for a serene home life, too. After all a man's home is his castle. The world outside may be full of violent eruptions, wars and threats of wars, but once a man retires to the sanctity of the home, there peace should reign. And I think that behind the closed doors of Chinatown, the peace found in their homes is due to the fact that the eldest present sets the pace—and since he was trained properly in his youth, he now trains his sons in the same manner. If the heart of the eldest is right, there is peace in the home. And if there is peace in the home, there is peace in the world.

The discipline is strict, especially when the child is beginning to grow up. "Never be a cry baby," is one thing that is stressed the hardest. This training in stoicism begins at an early age. And while sometimes the methods employed may seem cruel, they do, however, force upon the Chinese child an acceptance of life and death that he never loses. As a result the Chinese are not a race of chronic complainers. Complacent in whatever adversities may come their way, they have been taught patience from early youth.

I remember tiny seven-year-old Ling-Yung. A frail lad, with a sensitive face, he had been gently nurtured at home. When he came to the gymnasium class he had the reputation of being a "mother's boy" and a "cry baby." Certainly he never fell and bumped himself but

tears spouted forth. And instead of being comforted he was laughed at and made the butt of jokes. Of course, this didn't help the tears any, and there'd be a fresh flood. He'd be shoved around and pushed about, and any objection I'd raise would call forth the scornful retort, "He's a cry baby."

One day he ran a sliver in his soft little hand. One of the boys said to him, "If you cry, we won't let you come to the gym any more."

Ling-Yung looked hurt. He loved these Saturday excursions to the gym and the splash afterwards in the shallow end of the swimming pool. For a moment he stood his ground bravely, and choked back the tears.

"Come on," I said, "let's take that sliver out." And I led him to the dispensary.

"We're going along," said two of the boys, "to see he doesn't cry."

I took the sliver out, washed his hand, and taking up a bottle of iodine said, "This will hurt."

Ling-Yung made no comment but held out his hand. He winced as the iodine stung the raw part of his flesh. But he didn't cry.

"Okay!" said the first boy, and patted him on the back.

"Okay!" said the second boy.

Then off they scampered.

Ling-Yung looked at me. I had to turn away, for in his eyes was a sadness and a hurt that went deep into his soul. Then he bit his lip, and quietly slipped out the door.

I put away the bottle of iodine, and felt like the brute I was. As I was going down the dark hall toward

## A SCHOLAR LIKE MY FATHER

the gymnasium I heard the soft sound of sobbing. There in a dark corner was Ling-Yung, having his cry where nobody could see him.

A little later he came running into the gym.

"Hi, there," cried the boys.

"Okay," replied Ling-Yung, smiling bravely.

He was accepted now, for they knew he wouldn't be a "cry baby" any more.

Then he came over to me and said soberly, "Thank you."

I think he knew I had seen him. He also knew I would not say anything to the other boys, and he was grateful in his Chinese way.

From that day on he took the tumbles as they came and never whimpered. But I know he will find when he grows up, as sensitive people do, that this is a bitterly cruel world. And he'll have more than his share of hard knocks. Still I don't think he'll ever complain. He'll probably learn to laugh a bit. I hope so.

Should you ever ask a Chinese boy what he intends to be when he grows up, the answer is invariably, "A scholar like my father."

For in Chinese communal life, the scholar is given the highest rank. Next comes the farmer, for obviously the scholar must eat. Then the artisan, for tools must be supplied and the necessities of living. Finally lower in the social scale the merchant, for he it is who lives by selling what others produce. And the very lowest and least honored of all is the soldier, for his, they argue—save in times of national stress—is an occupation for which there is no use.



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

That's the way things are, the ideal of a perfect society. That it doesn't always work out that way is due to the frailties and inconsistencies of human nature.

But scholarship is the goal for which the children strive, and the reason is obvious. It is not learning for the sake of learning. But learning for the love and enjoyment in their old age of books and poetry, art and music, and the fine achievements of culture. This makes for a rich and not a lonely life when a man retires from business and settles down to spend his last days in contemplation of his soul and the wealth of a nation's artistic production. Better be alone and poor on a mountaintop with a book of poems that one knows and understands, so reason the Chinese, than to live unhappily in one's old age in the midst of a crowd surrounded by money bags and deprived of leisure in which to enjoy the art of the world.

So the Chinese children spend practically all day in school. From morning until three o'clock in the afternoon they attend the American schools. Scholarship is very high among Chinese children. Their I.Q. averages from 115 up, with many having as high an I.Q. as 130 and 140.

And discipline among Chinese children in our public schools, so their teachers tell me, is no problem at all. "No" means "No"—and "Yes" means "Yes." And the request is obeyed. But should a small child wiggle—and small children do—all the teacher has to say is, "I shall tell your father." Immediately repose and quiet. The Chinese are taught to control their emotions.

After they are dismissed from the public schools at three o'clock, the Chinese children go home for an

hour. Then from four until seven they attend the Chinese schools in Chinatown.

These schools were built by the Chinese themselves for their children. Here they are taught the precepts of Confucius and the Chinese philosophers, Chinese history and language, and other subjects of a purely cultural nature.

Then at seven o'clock home they fly for the evening meal. Here, when the last grain of rice has vanished from the rice bowl and the chopsticks are laid aside, the father or elder brother takes time to tell them stories of ancient China: stories of heroes, of poets and philosophers, stories about the glories of the family in past generations, often handed down by word of mouth.

Often these stories are old legends, such as the Chinese "Prodigal Son" story Mr. Wu told me. Even the adults love these stories, and I have often sat with some grownups over a cup of tea while they have told and retold these old legends. Many are parables, and often the tales told the children will have a definite bearing on the problems of the day or the difficulties that may arise on the morrow.

And so the Chinese children go to school practically all day long.

In discussing this with Mr. Wu, I once asked him, "But don't the children ever have a good time?"

"What do you mean by a good time?" he questioned. "Isn't learning enjoyment?"

"Yes, of course, but I mean play games—"

"They are always playing games. Look about you on the streets of Chinatown."

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

Quite true. The streets, when school is not in session and the weather permits, seem full of children in Chinatown; some bouncing balls against the stone walls, some shooting marbles in the gutters; some roller skating, or whatever the seasonal sport may be.

One may even see a group of six to eight small boys standing quietly looking into space, and seemingly doing nothing at all. They are having a wonderful time, making bets among themselves on how long it will take that cloud to vanish behind that roof top yonder, or else counting the number of automobiles that pass by in a given length of time.

There's no explaining games like that, but the Chinese love them. And kites. Give a Chinese child a kite, and his father will go along with him. But the father lets the boy have all the fun while he watches on the sidelines. He may, however, go off by himself some day and fly the kite. No childish game is ever too childish for a Chinese adult. That's what games are for, anyway. And there's no reason why an adult can't have just as much fun with a set of blocks and even a rattle—as any six-year-old.

There's a card game the youngsters play that is of their own invention. It's a combination of poker and blackjack. Don't ask me to explain it. I tried it once and soon found that the rules change, without warning, as the dealer wins or loses.

Anything goes in a friendly game of cards. The point is to win—and it doesn't matter how.

I remember the first time I played cards with some of my Chinese friends; everything was according to Hoyle for a time, and then the real fun began. Cards

vanished up sleeves, cards were stacked, and cards appeared from nowhere and were played at the crucial, winning moment. I had never attempted a game like it, but soon I too entered into the spirit of the game, and began to finagle as fast as anyone else.

The point is not to be caught. Let the smartest man win—provided he can get away with it—and his method doesn't matter in the least.

It was also a lesson in tolerance, for why should I censor my fellow men for doing the very thing I was engaged in myself? And with all human charity for their lack of ethics and my own, I have never had quite such an hilarious game of cards.

But I have always found the rules observed strictly by my Chinese friends when they are playing for money. Playing for fun is quite another matter.

Keeping a poker face and a couple of aces up your sleeve to play at the proper moment gives a man great personal pleasure and an inner glow of superiority. Try it sometime.

A quarrel over a card game is rare among the Chinese. Once while playing with some Chinese the game was progressing nicely, and everybody was finagling to his heart's content.

Suddenly one of them turned to the chap at his elbow and said, "Those two aces I've been sitting on and you just swiped from me, please put them back in the deck. I'll be needing them again before long."

"Okay," was the smiling response, and the game went placidly on.

I remember a party given for the little fellows, the

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

five- and six-year-olds. All sorts of games were played, like hunting for hidden objects, and being blindfolded and trying to pin the tail on the donkey. But it was the youngest boys present who won all the prizes that afternoon. The older boys saw to that. They finagled like fiends in order to give their little brothers the pleasure of winning.

But I must not give the impression that the Chinese are dishonest. A game, among equals, is fair spoils. And I have found them in all dealings the most honest people I know.

On a rainy Saturday one of the boys at the gym class had only four cents. He needed another penny for car fare home to Chinatown from the settlement, and asked if I would lend him a penny. I did so, and promptly forgot all about it. But the next week he returned the penny to me, and apologized for not doing it sooner.

The same thing happened with a pencil. I suppose I'm like many of my friends in being an out-and-out pencil thief. I have left home without a pencil in my pocket on more than one occasion, and when I get back to my desk again, I find in my pocket two or three oddly assorted pencils. How they got there, I don't know. That's why I leave them on my desk, for I know they'll vanish when my friends come to see me. And the score is even.

Once I lent a pencil to a Chinese boy. It was returned to me later, freshly sharpened. But the apologies were profuse. He had been careless, he told me. He had broken the pencil, and it was now shorter than it was

when I had let him have it. Could I ever forgive him for not returning it in the same length as it was originally?

I could. And I've tried to watch myself ever since when I've seen a stray pencil lying about.

Whenever a group of boys are playing together, the oldest one present is always appointed leader. It is up to him to make all decisions, settle all disputes, and decide what the game is to be. He'd better make the right decisions, too, for if he doesn't he loses face, and a new leader will be appointed. And should one of his group get into mischief, the leader must accept the punishment.

Since good manners begin in the home, the Chinese believe that they should be even more carefully displayed in public. And in order to save face with the public, always in Chinatown when a group of children are playing in the streets, not far away in the background is an older person, watching quietly to see that the boys do not misbehave. They supervise the games of their children very carefully. That is still another reason why there is no juvenile delinquency in Chinatown.

During the hot summer months, I have sometimes taken a group of young Chinese tots sightseeing about New York. We have gone on various occasions to the Bronx Zoo, to Central Park, and have even visited Grant's Tomb. But always on these excursions an older boy would go along with us. It made sightseeing easy, for I knew if anything happened, he would explain to the parents, and I would not be considered at fault.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

But one day I had made an appointment to take a group of five ten-year-olds for a row on the lagoon in Central Park. They were all waiting for me at the appointed hour when I arrived in Chinatown. But that day no older boy could go along. I was reluctant about going without one. Suppose something should happen? How could I explain? And sons are precious.

But one of the fathers reassured me. "You go ahead," he said. "It's okay. They'll be safe rowing."

Even when I told him I wasn't much of a swimmer, he still insisted, so off we started. Observing good manners in public, they followed me silently. It was a strange procession, a lanky, plodding American followed by a row of silent Chinese boys. More than one passer-by turned to stare and laugh, but we didn't mind.

Getting to Central Park Quan-Ling plucked at my coat tails.

"Will you ask the policeman something for me?" he said.

"Just what?" I replied.

"Ask him if I can walk on the grass just once—where it says, 'Keep off.'"

Quan-Ling was used to playing in the streets of Chinatown, and grass—a lawn—was a Shangri-La to him.

The policeman, who probably had youngsters of his own and was soft-hearted, anyway, and understood, gave his consent. So Quan-Ling crawled under the fence, and treading as gently as if he were walking on eggs, for the first time in his young life walked on grass.

We got a boat and started to row about the lake.

## A SCHOLAR LIKE MY FATHER

Hardly had we started when two Chinese, strangers to me, appeared on the bank, drew up a bench, sat down, and started to smoke.

The boys knew them, and every time we passed they cried their "hellos," and the Chinese responded.

There was a flock of ducks on the lake. We all had bags of peanuts, and we soon discovered that a peanut thrown into the water would attract the ducks. They'd swim after us, gobble the peanut, and then emit a "quack-quack" asking for more. The boys thought it was a lot more fun to feed the ducks than to eat the peanuts themselves, and especially since the ducks would swim after us. So about the lake we rowed, followed by a flock of squawking ducks.

We pulled up in the shade. The ducks, too, took a rest and floated lazily about. I thought of St. Francis and the birds, but all we had this afternoon were some young "heathen Chinees" and a flock of Mayor La Guardia's tame ducks.

A lonely, tattered little colored boy came down to the shore.

"Hello, white boys," he said wistfully. "Having fun rowing?"

"Okay," they smiled back.

And they were, for each was taking turns at the oars, and I was holding the watch, so no one would take more than his allotted time.

"If you take me for a ride," said the colored boy, "I'll do all the rowing."

The Chinese boys looked at each other. Then Quan-Ling, because he was the oldest present, said, "Get in."



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

So once around the lake, the colored boy had the fun of rowing. It's rather a comforting thought that the younger brothers of the world are not yet snobs.



At last we decided to go on home, as our hands were getting blistered. The two Chinese were still seated on the shore, smoking.

## A SCHOLAR LIKE MY FATHER

"We're going home now!" cried the boys.

"Okay!" said the Chinese, and got up and walked off into the Park.

Later I learned they had been sent there by the father to whom I had expressed my doubts about taking the boys without an older youth going along. I had asked for someone, and he had sent two of his friends to go and fulfill my request.

## PROFESSIONAL MATCHMAKER

.....

ONE day Eddie Wu came to see me. He had finished college the year before and now was in business with his father. We sat and talked about many things.

Finally he said, "My father thinks I need more discipline."

I laughed. "Haven't you had it all your life?"

"Yes," he replied, "from one angle. Now he says it is time I learned to obey from another angle. He thinks I should get married and have a wife to boss me around properly."

"But I thought the men were boss in the Chinese home."

"That's what you think," grinned back Eddie.

Several months passed, and while I saw Eddie occasionally, he never again mentioned his approaching marriage. But I did know that when the time came, it would be in the approved orthodox Chinese manner. Trust Mr. Wu for that.

Then one day the telephone rang. It was Eddie and he said, "My bride is coming to town tomorrow. I need moral support. Come with me to the Grand Central. I want to see what she looks like."

"Don't you know?" I asked.

"Certainly not. I've never met her. Good-by."

And he hung up.

This was, to me, slightly bewildering. However, I should have known the Chinese well enough by this time not to be too surprised.

I met Eddie at the appointed time, an hour before the train arrived. Eddie was more nervous and ill at ease than I have ever seen him. Usually with true Chinese stoicism, he rose above every embarrassing situation with philosophical aplomb, and remained bland and calm in the most trying of circumstances. But this morning, even though it was midwinter, tiny beads of perspiration stood on his forehead.

He wandered around the Grand Central like one of Dante's lost souls. I tagged along at his heels.

"What are you looking for?" I asked impatiently.

"I'm trying to find a place to hide."

"Why?"

"I don't want her to see me."

"Aren't you meeting her?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"It wouldn't be proper."

"Then what are you doing here?"

"Taking a prenuptial peek!" he answered. "This is very bad manners on my part. My father would be very cross with me if he knew. But you can't blame me for being curious, can you?"

"Look," I cried in exasperation. "Stop being so mysterious, and explain what this is all about."

Eddie looked surprised and grieved.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"I thought you knew," he said gently. And then as patiently as if he were speaking to a ten-year-old child he said, "It's all very simple. I'm being married. My future wife is coming on the train from Boston. I've never met her. And I want to see what she looks like. That's all there is to it."

So there we were, trying to hide in the Grand Central. The passengers began to troop from the train. Eddie stood first on one foot, then on the other. He attempted a brave smile. The smile faded, and he looked worried. Then he stood quite still.

Among the passengers was an elderly Chinese man, and following respectfully a few feet behind him was a young Chinese girl. Eddie, whose plan had been to remain behind a pillar, stepped impulsively forward. He made a futile gesture of tipping his hat in the approved American fashion. The girl gave him a quick glance, then demurely lowered her eyes, and continued on her way.

"Whew!" said Eddie. "I shouldn't have done that. But she's prettier than her picture. Come—I need a beer!"

This, as I learned later, was no mail-order bride, no matrimonial agency wedding. It was a marriage consummated in the orthodox Chinese manner according to customs prescribed hundreds of years ago. The selection of a wife for Eddie Wu had involved many months of careful research, profound calculations, and careful planning. Nothing had been left to chance.

Mr. Wu, explaining it to me, had said, "Even though Eddie graduated from college, I felt his education was by no means complete. He was but the half of an un-

## PROFESSIONAL MATCHMAKER

completed whole. And I also observed that he had been restless. Three times in one month I had seen him at cheap burlesque shows. So I felt he needed a wife and several sons to calm his unstable nature and relieve my



mind from worry over his midnight excursions into foreign parts of the city. So I very carefully went about selecting a wife for him.”

“Didn’t Eddie have any choice in the matter?”

He shook his head. “Why should he? It’s only the Americans who fall in love and then marry. We Chinese marry first—then fall in love. It is much better that way. More lasting.”

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"How does Eddie feel about it?" I asked.

"Ask him."

I did, and Eddie's answer was surprising. "My grandfather selected my mother for my father. He didn't see her until his wedding day—and I'm here. So it's all right. It always has been. My father has good judgment. I trust him. I shall be happy with the wife he chooses for me."

This attitude may seem on the surface one of sublime indifference and complete resignation. But it isn't that. It is the Chinese training—obedience to the wishes of the elder.

The almost scientific approach of the Chinese to marriage is utterly devoid of sentimentality. "Moonlight and roses" have no place in their scheme of things. They believe that courtship should begin with marriage, rather than have a climactic end under a shower of orange blossoms at the altar.

Their approach is not unlike that of some present-day social workers and psychologists who are at the moment giving courses in matrimony in colleges and universities, and trying to evolve some scheme whereby the youth of the nation, plunging headlong into matrimony, will find an adjustment that leads to continued marital happiness rather than a trip to Reno. The great difference between the Chinese and the college professors is that the Chinese approach has been tried and proved, while the American idea is comparatively recent.

According to reports from the Census Bureau of the United States the ratio of divorce to marriage in this country is one to six. Divorce among the Chinese is so

## PROFESSIONAL MATCHMAKER

rare as to be practically unknown. If we Americans marry in haste and repent in the law courts, the Chinese marry in leisure and stay put. There must be a reason.

In getting his son married, Mr. Wu was taking no chances. He wasn't allowing Eddie to pick a wife at random, inspired perhaps by an automobile ride in the moonlight or a casual, emotional flare-up and first meeting, so dear to the female novelists' romantic love-at-first-sight theory. He was going to select a wife for Eddie himself, and he was going to make certain that, according to all the rules of the game, this wife would be the one wife who would be best suited to Eddie. All Eddie had to do in the matter was to attend his own wedding and be properly married.

But it really wasn't Mr. Wu who actually made the selection of a wife for Eddie after all. He was too wise for that.

"Finding a wife for my son was too delicate a problem for me to undertake myself," he said. "To go about interviewing various young women on the subject of marrying my son would not be good manners. Most embarrassing—to me, the young woman, and the young woman's parents. I'd have been considered a nosy old busybody. So I hired a professional matchmaker—a *Moy Yen*—or go-between. A woman, of course, for women are best at matchmaking, their thoughts being naturally inclined toward matrimony and babies. I paid her one hundred dollars and expenses. And if there are sons the first few years, I shall have to pay her more. She'll wheedle it out of me."

The *Moy Yen* he selected was a Mrs. Wong, fat and



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

jovial. Being the mother of four grown sons she had no illusions concerning the superiority of the masculine sex. In reality she was an expert character analyst, a psychologist in her own robust way, but her understanding of human nature was based on experience and common sense rather than theories drawn from a textbook.

"But weren't you leaving a lot to chance?" I asked Mr. Wu.

"No," he replied. "It was a matter of careful calculation."

I shuddered. Being married according to "careful calculation" didn't strike a responsive chord in my romantic nature. But Mr. Wu carefully explained.

The *Moy Yen's* first duty was to find out all she could about Eddie. What sort of young man was he? Was he thrifty or extravagant? Was he sociable or retiring in nature? What were his good points? What his bad points?

So Mrs. Wong set about inquiring from his friends, his neighbors, his business associates, and even from the people who didn't like Eddie. Over teacups many questions were asked and many answered. What fun Mrs. Wong must have had, spending her time gossiping about Eddie, and being paid for it. It took several months, of course, but ultimately she had a well-rounded character sketch of Eddie. She knew his traits, his ambitions, and more about him than he would suspect himself. She knew him as others saw him.

She found many good qualities that should be encouraged. She also found faults that must be overcome. He was, as all of us are, an unexplainable bundle of

conflicting human virtues and vices. He wasn't all good. He wasn't all bad. He was, as Mr. Wu had said, the half of an uncompleted whole.

Then she drew a chart of Eddie's character and was now ready to apply to her selection of a wife for him the ancient "Principle of the Yang and Yin."

This "Principle of the Yang and Yin" is expressed concisely in a symbol called by the Chinese "The Seal of Life."

You can see it for yourself if you like in New York's Chinatown—on Pell Street, to be exact, outside the Chinese Museum of Art and Science—in a twentieth century neon sign. Brightly flashing on and off, it is usually unnoticed by the sightseers who parade up and down the street. And yet, so the Chinese believe, in that symbol lies the riddle of their destinies.

It is one of the oldest symbols in the world. You will find it in China everywhere you go; carved on old tombstones, over doors, on scrolls and tapestries, in books, and sometimes beaten into the gold trinkets babies wear on their silk caps. It is older than Confucius. In fact, it is upon this symbol that the whole Confucian doctrine is based.

This symbol, so the story goes, was given to the world about the thirtieth century B.C., by the mythological first Emperor of China, Fuh-Hi. He is credited with having introduced matrimony into China, and making many other much-needed reforms. He even wrote a strange sort of book, not at all the sort of thing anybody can pick up and read.

For what Fuh-Hi had to say he said in the form of rudiments. These rudiments were merely eight trigrams

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

and sixty-four hexagrams composed of whole and broken lines (—, - -), without any text or explanation. They were supposed to give a theory of the phenomena of the physical universe and of moral and political principles. It was all very puzzling and very obscure.

It wasn't until many centuries after Fuh-Hi that the meaning was made clear. Along about the year 1150 B.C. there was a jail in China containing a scholarly revolutionist. Having a great deal of spare time on his hands, he set about interpreting the passwords to the secrets of the universe as laid down by the Emperor Fuh-Hi. He even wrote a book of his own.

Upon his release from prison—the revolution he started was a success—this scholar became the Emperor Wen, and the book he had written was required reading. It is called *The Book of Changes*, and to this day is considered one of the five Chinese classics. But even though this book is viewed with great veneration, there are some scholars who will admit, in all honesty, that it is not easy reading, and often the meaning is not quite clear.

It took another Chinese sage and scholar—some centuries later than the Emperor Wen—to clear up many of these obscurities. And often quoting from *The Book of Changes* and using it as a basis for his philosophical system, he formulated the present-day code of ethics and moral behavior of the Chinese. This philosopher was K'ung-Futse, known to us as Confucius (551-479 B.C.), and the Chinese have been following his teachings ever since.

The very essence of his philosophy is contained in the symbol "The Seal of Life," which is the heart of

the whole matter of the "Principle of the Yang and Yin." It is really rather simple.

According to the Chinese, the world was evolved out of chaos some three million years ago. This evolution was brought about by a force which separated the two principles in all life: the active and the passive, the positive and the negative, or, if you like, the male and the female. Yang is the male, active and positive. Yin is the female, passive and negative. Yang also means "heaven, sun, light." Yin also means "earth, moon, darkness."

As Confucius says, "Marriage means the union of two houses for the purpose of producing offspring to preside over the worship of heaven and earth, of the ancestral spirits, and of the gods of land and grains. If heaven and earth (representing Yang and Yin) do not come together, there is no life in the world."

He also says, "Therefore man is the product of the forces of heaven and earth, of the union of the Yang and Yin principles, the incarnation of spirits and the essence of the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and soil). Therefore man is the heart of the universe, born to enjoy food and color and noise."

The center of the symbol of the Yang and Yin represents the egg, the yolk and the white strongly differentiated. Without the one, the other is not complete. But the two in union make the perfect circle, the perfect whole. According to Fuh-Hi's theory, it is the union of these two that produces and reproduces other elements in the universe. These elements are represented in the symbol as follows: (≡) means "sky," (≡) "marsh," (≡) "fire," (≡) "thunder," (≡) "wind,"

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

(☵) "water," (☶) "hills" or "mountains," and (☷) "earth." They are arranged in a circle in such a manner that they are complementary in design, and this opposition is extended to the object they represent.

As Mr. Wu told me, it is man's purpose here on earth, with the sky above him, to keep harmony between the two forces, and between all the forces of good and evil, light and darkness. The Chinese, being realists at heart as well as poets, believe that life is composed of both good and bad and that perfect harmony comes only when the two are brought together in perfect union.

"Now if you take this Yang and Yin," said Mr. Wu, "the egg in the center, and if you draw a line through it thus: you can see how one-half of the half is larger



than the other. That might be compared to my son's good qualities; the smaller half his weak points. So the *Moy Yen* sought to find a woman strong where Eddie is weak, and weak where Eddie is strong. In that way there will be a balance of temperaments, and their union will be a happy one. And that is why, too," he concluded, "this symbol is called 'The Seal of Life.'"

Eddie, the *Moy Yen* discovered, was an extravagant young man. Therefore she sought a wife who was noted

## PROFESSIONAL MATCHMAKER

for her thrifty qualities. Picture two extravagant persons in the same household. It wouldn't be long until the wolf of debt would howl on their doorstep. Eddie was also a sociable chap, fond of gadding about, and considered his home principally a place in which to hang his hat. Eddie's wife, therefore, should be a retiring and shy woman, a home-loving person. Married to Eddie she might overcome this shyness, and Eddie, too, might find more delights in his home than he had found before.

It was finally in Boston that Mrs. Wong, the *Moy Yen*, after the same careful inquiry she had made in determining Eddie's character, discovered such a young woman. Her temperament, according to the chart, contrasted nicely with Eddie's. Moreover she was of his own social class, an important item in the *Moy Yen's* search.

"Those who come from houses with doors of bamboo should not mate with those whose doors are of wood," so wisely reason the Chinese. "The daughter of a governor of a province would not be happy in the hut of a farmer."

A report was made to Mr. Wu. He was quite satisfied. Gifts were exchanged between the parents of the prospective bride and groom, and the engagement was sealed.

The only thing Eddie sent his future wife was his picture, and she responded with a like courtesy. The two young people remained discreetly silent. Their parents had brought them into the world. They had now arranged their marriage. It was their doing—almost you might say, the parents' celebration—and with

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

customary deference to the wishes of their elders, the two young people let their parents have their triumph.

And save for Eddie's unorthodox, prenuptial peek at the Grand Central, he didn't see his bride-to-be until after the Chinese wedding ceremony. This preceded the American marriage as prescribed by law: a license at City Hall, a preacher, and a ring. But the Chinese ceremony would be just as binding.

The day of the Chinese wedding finally arrived. It was at Eddie's home in Chinatown, not at the home of the bride. Here he was to wait until his bride was brought to him. The door to the outside world in the apartment building had been given a new coat of red paint. Red is the color symbolizing "good luck." Inside, the table in the front room had been covered with an embroidered cloth, and on the table we saw joss sticks, wine glasses, a whole roasted chicken, and a pig's head with red streamers in its ears (symbolizing that the bride was a virgin). On the walls hung a *song hee*, a red cloth embroidered in letters of gold with his name, the name of his bride, and good wishes for their happy union.

The hour was set for noon. Slowly the wedding guests assembled. Eddie, looking his best in a new suit and a fresh haircut, sat in his room. Nobody spoke to him. Not even Tsai Pin-Chang, his best man. This room of Eddie's was from now on to be the bridal chamber. He would continue to live with his parents, of course, until such time as his family became too large. Then he might move across the hall.

Eddie had removed from the room his own trappings; and in their place was the furniture the bride's

parents had sent: a red bureau, a red chair, and a red bed. Her clothes were neatly packed in a red chest—and Eddie had thoughtfully put his picture on the bureau.

As the hour approached he became more dignified and calm, but the slight forced smile on his lips proved he was as nervous as any bridegroom.

Noon came and went. We waited an hour. An hour and a half. Two hours. As the clock ticked off the passing minutes, and the bride failed to put in an appearance, Eddie, far from betraying his nervousness and anxiety, became more and more pleased.

"She is displaying the proper modesty," he whispered. "She will be here before sundown."

Just inside the front door was a large bowl filled with straw. I wondered about that. Then came a low knock on the door. Eddie made no sign.

Pin-Chang nudged me. "She's come," he said.

Quickly someone dropped a match into the straw in the bowl. The bright flames shot upward. The door was opened, and Mrs. Wong, the *Moy Yen*, entered with the bride. She was lovely to look at, dressed in a black coat and red satin skirt, hair all curled, necklaces galore, rings and bracelets of jade and gold, holding a fan before her face. The *Moy Yen* dodged the bowl with its burning straw, but the bride stepped quickly over it.

"It means," whispered Pin-Chang, "that she is burning her past behind her, and ridding herself of all evil spirits."

She was then taken into an inner room, and Eddie, who had been looking discreetly at the floor, stepped



bravely forward. Seated by the table were Mr. and Mrs. Wu. An old man with white hair rose as Eddie came up. He was the head of the Wu family clan, the elder of elders. Facing him was a chair, but Eddie didn't sit down. He stood on the chair, instead.

"That means," Pin-Chang again whispered to me, "he is now elevated to complete manhood."

Then the elder began to speak in Chinese. Pin-Chang translated for me.

"He's telling Eddie that he has now become a man and is entering man's estate and taking on man's full responsibilities. He's saying that he has come from a long line of honorable ancestors, and it is his duty as an obedient son to respect and revere his father, just as he shall expect his sons to respect and revere him. He is telling him to live according to the Confucian principles of the superior man, and to let his conduct be such that his sons can always respect him, just as he now respects his worthy father."

Then Eddie stepped down from the chair, and following the instructions of the elder, bowed to the east, thanking the heavens for giving him a soul. Then he bowed to his father, thanking him for giving him life.

Nine times he bowed to his father; three times standing, three kneeling, and then three standing once again.

"That is the ultimate of respect," so Pin-Chang told me. "Not so many bows does one give to anyone else. A son can do no more than bow nine times to his parent."

From the table Eddie took a glass of wine, and with both hands presented it to his father. He also gave him a betel nut, *bing ling*, a symbol of fertility. Then in

Chinese he told his father that he was thankful to him for having been given life, that he would try and repay him for this great blessing, he would live up to the traditions of his ancestors, do his best to have many children, and be honorable in his treatment of his fellow men.

To his mother he also bowed nine times and presented her with a betel nut.

"You are now getting a daughter," he said, "and life will be easier for you from now on. You were once a girl, then a wife, then a mother, and now you are becoming a mother-in-law. I wish for you the supreme happiness that can come to a woman—may you be a grandmother very soon."

At the completion of his speech, his parents ate the betel nuts, thus signifying that they accepted his bringing a bride into their home.

Then the elder put a red string in Eddie's button-hole, as proof that he was now a married man. (In China a red sash would have been thrown over his shoulder.) Pin-Chang, the best man, at this point put a hat on Eddie's head.

"A symbol that he rules the family," he told me later. "In America the saying is that the man in the household wears the pants—in China, the hat. It means the same thing."

And now Eddie retired to another room with becoming modesty, for it was his bride's turn to display her filial obedience. She, too, bowed nine times, first to Mr. Wu and then to Mrs. Wu. She had with her a shirt she had made herself and a pair of slippers. She asked Mrs. Wu to wear the shirt, and put it on her,

thus showing that since she was now coming to live in the Wu home she would show obedience to her elders. She then put the slippers on Mrs. Wu, signifying she would be of service.

Mrs. Wu rose, and taking the bride, led her into the bridal chamber. The bed had been covered with evergreen branches and pecan nuts, which meant, "May the union always be as fresh as the evergreen and as prosperous, and may many children bless the household."

Upon the bed, so Pin-Chang told me afterwards, Mrs. Wu placed the shirt, and in doing this she said, in her Chinese way, that she was exchanging good for good, and since the bride had signified her intention of helping her, she in turn would do what she could to help the bride. Then she ate another betel nut that the daughter had given her, and accepted her new daughter into the family.

It was now time for the wedding guests to take their departure. But neither the bride nor the groom was on hand. It was the parents who were congratulated. Bowls of sage tea sweetened with sugar were given the guests, and drinking this the parents were toasted, and through them, the bridal couple.

This particular drink meant, "May life for all of you be sweet and happy, and nothing bitter ever cross the stars of your destiny."

The ceremony was over. Eddie was now a married man. So we all took our departure.

But the fun attendant upon a Chinese wedding was now to begin. Banquet followed banquet in rapid succession. Eddie's bride must be properly introduced, not

only to his family and cousins but also to his friends and his business associates. For three days the feasting continued.

The first banquet was that night. We were greeted at the door by Mr. and Mrs. Wu, their bosoms swelling with pride, and receiving with gracious modesty the congratulations offered *them*. Neither the bride nor the groom was as yet present.

The banquet began, and it wasn't until after the first course that Eddie appeared. From table to table he went, making a triumphal round of the banquet hall.

"*Ho sai gai* (good luck)," cried the guests, toasting his marriage in Chinese wine. Then he sat down at the table with his father and the elders of the family clan.

Soon the bride appeared, but nobody paid the slightest attention to her. However, someone did thoughtfully find a chair for her in the middle of the room, and there she sat, alone and neglected, looking like a drooping lily.

The banquet lasted until midnight. Course followed course in rapid succession: bird's nest soup, chicken with lichee nuts, boneless duck, shark's fin soup, all the banquet delicacies. I lost count of the number of dishes after the eighteenth had been served. By midnight we were so stuffed with food that we were red in the face. At last came a bowl of steaming liquid, white, looking like hot milk. But it wasn't. It was an almond soup, an aid to digestion, and high time! The banquet was over.

But the ceremony was not yet complete. It was now

the bride's turn to extend courtesies, and our turn to reciprocate. Here were her new relatives, her new friends, and as a welcome to her home from now on, she went from table to table, and shyly offered each guest from a tray a cup of tea—the cup of hospitality. It was her first courtesy, her first bit of service to us as Eddie's wife.

Having been instructed beforehand by Pin-Chang, together with the others I did the proper thing. As I accepted the cup of tea, I placed on the tray, neatly folded in red paper, some money. This was my wedding present. And a rather nice way of doing it, I thought. Since all the gifts were similarly wrapped, the bridal couple would have no way of knowing who gave which. And with the money they could buy what they needed, and wanted. Much better than our hit-and-miss method, for I've known American brides who received ten tablecloths and no napkins, and vice versa.

After the tea-drinking ceremony, the bride again came to each table and presented each guest with a betel nut wrapped in fresh grape leaves, which we all promptly ate. That, as I knew, signified that we accepted her as Eddie's wife.

There was nothing more left to be done, so we thanked our hosts, again congratulated the proud parents, and staggered home.

But I was puzzled. Here was Eddie, married to a woman he had never seen before, about whom he knew nothing, save what he had been told. And the same thing was true of his bride. Would they, I wondered, come to an adjustment and understanding—and how?

I later made so bold as to ask Mr. Wu.

He was most patient with me in his reply. "The Chinese have a saying," he said, "*foo suey mon soon poo*, meaning, 'to keep afloat in a leaky boat both must bail the water out.' Marriage in any language is like a leaky boat. And Eddie and his wife are now adrift. Perhaps the weather is calm, perhaps it is stormy. But they are in a leaky boat together, and it's up to them. And they must both bail the water out.

"My son is starting out on a great adventure, the adventure of discovering what his wife is like. A woman's mind is as a needle thrown into an ocean. He will have great fun, for she is an unsolved mystery. He will try to understand her—and she him. They will discover in each other new traits of character, new bits of temperament. He will learn to forgive her, as she must learn to forgive him.

"They are like two strangers starting on a journey through life. And each must, of necessity, learn to make compromises. It will help develop their characters. Of great importance are the first courtesies he pays her. He will have to be gentle and kind with her. And she will respond with similar kindnesses. Have you ever been on a train and gotten into conversation with a stranger?"

I nodded.

"Remember how the conversation started—slowly at first—and then step by step you found out the stranger's likes and dislikes, and perhaps in the end discovered a new friend? It will be like that with Eddie and his wife—with one difference, however. Should the stranger not be a person to your liking, you can always walk away. But not so with Eddie. He must remain with

his wife, and make compromises. But the *Moy Yen* has attended to that. His temperament is balanced with her temperament. They have much to learn from each other, and knowing that, they will come to an adjustment.

"They must each, occasionally, give in to the other. It is only in making compromises that a man learns. It is in giving up his stubborn and hastily thought out conclusions that a man reaches a deeper and richer understanding of life. Eddie has learned some truths from books. He will now learn more from being married."

There was one more question I wished to ask, and I asked it.

Mr. Wu was amused, but he gave an answer. The Chinese view with amazement our Puritanical concern on matters of sex. We spend entirely too much time, they feel, in talking about it.

"When a man is hungry, he eats," said Mr. Wu, "but he doesn't have a steady diet of pieces of fat, nor does he spend his entire time discussing food and various flavors."

Not that the Chinese are unemotional concerning sex. There are some four hundred million Chinese, so somewhere along the line there must have been an emotion—or two. But marriage is a family matter with them. It isn't something to plunge into as a means of gratification of desire. Marriage keeps the family alive. Its primary purpose is to bring children into the world, and keep the home fires aglow.

A year after Eddie was married I saw him one day

PROFESSIONAL MATCHMAKER

in Chinatown. He was pushing a baby carriage, and displaying to his friends his tiny eldest son.

"See what I got!" he said proudly.

I'm inclined to believe his marriage is a success.



## THE TALES THE OLD MEN TELL

.....

ONE of the times I like Chinatown best is after midnight. By that time the sightseers have fled with their noisy shouts, their trinkets, and their patronizing airs. When they have eaten their chop suey, had their souvenirs wrapped in red paper, and gone on their way, then it is the Chinese come out of their homes, and Chinatown is theirs again. This time it's the old men—the elders—the leaders of Chinatown—the grandfathers, the proud old Chinese who still cling to their native customs, and although some of them were born in this country and others came here as young men, they are now too tired and too indifferent to even bother speaking English and observing our ways and manners.

I think most of them sleep during the day. They remain at home behind drawn curtains, shutting out the noise and the hurry, leaving the grandchildren and the problems of the day to grandmother and their grown sons who have now taken their place in business. They remain at home during the late afternoon with their scrolls, their books, and their fans. At last turned

## THE TALES THE OLD MEN TELL

scholars or artists after a lifetime of struggle in worldly affairs, they have now retired gracefully.

But at midnight—or later—they come out to visit with their friends, and in certain restaurants where the foreigners never go, they sit around tables drinking tea, and discussing politics and philosophical problems.

These men are the Morgans, the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts of Chinatown. But you wouldn't believe it if you saw them. They dress for comfort and not for style. They leave style and snappy clothes to the younger men, who have yet to make an impression upon the world. Clad in a pair of old trousers, a loose-fitting black jacket made of beaten bamboo, and soft, easy-on-the-foot Chinese slippers, you wouldn't think they had a dollar. But they are retired now from business, and who cares how they look, and why bother about appearances?

The wealthier a man becomes, the more he can afford to dress badly. That's how they reason. Perhaps grandmother scolds once in a while and makes them dress up for formal occasions, but after all an old hat, an old shoe, and an old friend—worn, tried and true—those are the most comforting to the body as well as to the soul. In fact they are slightly suspicious of anyone who is too well dressed. That person, so they argue, wants money. And so he puts on an air of well-being in order to deceive you. After all, now that they are growing old, there are more important things in this world than the constant striving after a dollar. They've fought for every dollar in their youth and early manhood. Let their sons now carry on the fight.

The great enjoyment they derive at this midnight

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

hour is in talk. Never violent in their discussions, never forceful, always quiet, gentle, and humorous—one of them may hold the floor and discourse for a solid hour without stopping—they sit all night and talk, and drink quarts of tea.

Sometimes their sons and grandsons drift in, sit at my table, and translate the stories.

"I wouldn't believe this," they say, nodding toward their honored parent, "if my father hadn't told me."

Sometimes these old men speak to me. Sometimes they don't. But it doesn't matter. They are living in their own world now, a world of old China, and why should anyone intrude?

When morning comes, and the first glimpse of dawn touches up the store fronts with its magic freshness, they drift to the bulletin boards on the corner where the latest news of the world and China is posted. Then silently, and without comment, they wander on home, to ponder over the turn of events, and by night they have prepared the proper expression of their opinions on the latest developments. A too hasty comment, they feel, might betray their lack of knowledge. Better take time to think things over—tomorrow is time enough to express an opinion.

And tomorrow they'll be back again, discussing the problems of the day, tempering their comments with quotations from the philosophers, drinking tea, and telling stories.

The Chinatown of the elders is a peaceful, quiet, adventurous Chinatown; a Chinatown of silences and subtle undertones, of philosophy and poetry, of humor and thoughtful laughter.

## THE TALES THE OLD MEN TELL

It wasn't long after Eddie Wu got married that Mr. Wu, anticipating that soon he'd be a grandfather, began to join this midnight group of elders. Always during the day on the streets he was well dressed and had a prosperous air. He was putting up a good front. But now at last he could begin to forget all the trials and turmoils of a business life, and settle down to a happy and comfortable old age. It wasn't with a feeling of resignation, either. It was more of a triumph. For this was what he had been working for all these years. And now, of course, he had Eddie to carry on. Eddie was running the importing business, and doing nicely. Sometimes Mr. Wu, during the day, would put on his neatly pressed American clothes and appear at his place of business. But as time went on, these formal visits became less and less frequent. And finally, since Eddie was doing all right, and the business was flourishing, they ceased altogether.

To be a scholar had been his ambition from early youth. And now that he had retired he could devote his entire time to his books and scrolls. For his own pleasure he started to translate the poems of Wang Wei, who lived in the seventh century. That was his "project," and he had decided upon one thing to do, and aimed to do that one thing well. He often spent a whole day looking through his Chinese and his English dictionaries for the exact word that would properly express the subtleties of the thought.

Besides the business and the balance in the bank, he wanted to leave behind him, when he passed away, a bit of scholarship. Dollars have a way of vanishing. But a work of art could be kept and passed on from

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

one generation to the next in the family. And his learning would be admired by grandsons and great-grandsons long after the last dollar he had earned had been spent. And should he not live long enough to complete his work, Eddie would take it up where he left off, when it came time for him to retire from business and pass on the worries of barter and trade to his son.

"A man should work in his youth, so he can enjoy himself in his old age," said Mr. Wu. "Or at least have enough sons so they can support him in comfort," he added with a twinkle in his eye.

The Chinese believe that in a man's youth, the only way to ultimate happiness lies in work. They are an industrious race. Observe the laundryman in your neighborhood. The light in his shop burns early and late.

"The Chinese start with a philosophy, not with a motive," said Mr. Wu. "Of what use is the accumulation of all the wealth in the world, if a man hasn't peace in his own soul? And while we Chinese believe in work for its own sake, we also think it's very nice not to work if you don't have to. A man works only for the money with which to buy his leisure. A Chinese wishes to enjoy life. Therefore, he earns enough to make that enjoyment possible. Nothing gives a Chinese more face than to have enough cash somewhere so he can walk down the street on a working day, thus proving to his friends that he has been diligent, honest, and saving. It gives him great face. He can now take life in an easy stride. I laid aside my books for a time after I had graduated from college. Perhaps it was just as well. Now, since Eddie is married and learning to

## THE TALES THE OLD MEN TELL

become sober and industrious, and with some money put aside, I can return to my books with a new vision, a deeper understanding of the wisdom of the poets, because I have been in the midst of life. I can now become a scholar like my father was before me."

The spectacle of a retired businessman setting out at long last to enjoy life and see the world and not knowing what to do with himself—as is so often the case with our American millionaires—is unknown among the Chinese.

So that's why in every Chinatown in this country you will see old men sitting in the teahouses, or on hot summer days fanning themselves idly in the doorways of shops. They are the retired merchants. And since they have learned that simple pleasures are the best and inviting one's soul the greatest of man's achievements, every Chinese looks forward to the day when his efforts as a young man will have made that desire possible.

So what starts with a philosophy ends with the complete enjoyment of that philosophy.

Mr. Wu, as time went on, became more and more like the elder I knew who owned a shop in Chinatown. He was a man of seventy. He had retired when he was around fifty, and since then had devoted all his time to scholarship. In fact he was one of the best-known scholars in all Chinatown, and was often consulted when it came to a fine point in the interpretation of the philosophers.

One evening, shopping with some friends, we stopped in his store. He was seated by the door, seemingly half asleep. Shabbily dressed, he looked like an

old man who had drifted in from the street, and had asked permission to rest a while. Customers came and went, and nobody paid any attention to him. Nor did he seem to notice them. You felt sorry for him and could easily believe the clerks were doing a kindness to a tired, friendless and lonely old man.

My friends were looking for a certain curio not on display. The clerk told us they didn't have in stock that particular carved bit of teakwood. But the old man at the door mumbled a few words in Chinese. The clerk said he would take another look. And from a box, high on the shelves, covered with dust, he brought out the desired object. The proprietor knew where the goods were kept, even if the clerk didn't.

As we were leaving I had to guide quickly out of the door one of my charitable friends who was getting ready to drop a dime into the palm of the old man by the door. Looking back I saw a faint smile cross his lips. He had sensed what had almost happened, and I think he considered it a good joke.

It gave him great pleasure not to be recognized. It was his Chinese way of having achieved fame.

To become famous and be pointed out wherever one goes the Chinese consider a great nuisance. Fame, they think, is a disease—the worst ill that could happen to the soul, or the inner man. Only the weak and the vain seek the bubble of elusive fame. A strong man should be secure in his own soul, and not seek to be an important figure in the eyes of a fickle public. It is all right to be honored. That is a different matter. But to be famous—how well the Chinese know what heartaches fame brings. How lonely becomes the man who climbs

to the heights. Better be humble and unknown and enjoy life than to have your every word, your every action the subject of comment.

And with each successive public achievement, more and more a man's life—his very thoughts, habits, and actions—is molded by what people think of him. His every step along the street is watched, and significance placed upon his unintentional frown or spontaneous laughter. His every freedom of movement is gone, his personal life; and he lives a slave to public opinion. Also, so reason the Chinese, with every bit of added fame and word of praise, someone hurls a harsh bit of adverse criticism. There is no peace of soul in becoming famous.

That is why the Chinese, even those in public life, so often have a go-between, a *Moy Yen*, so to speak. Or perhaps better expressed, a "front man." This is someone who acts their part for them in public, while they sit in the background and watch carefully what is going on. This "front man" is paid to take the applause as well as the hisses.

A Chinese, in an official or even semiofficial capacity, may even sometimes pose as his own secretary. I had an experience with that sort of thing. I had a few questions to ask of a certain, let's call him, "Chung." Inquiring for Chung I met a suave, poised man who said he was Chung's secretary.

"Can I see Mr. Chung?" I asked.

"Chung is a very busy man," was the answer. "What is it you want?"

Mind you, it was Chung himself I was talking to.

But I carefully explained my errand.



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"I don't know whether Chung will agree or not," said Chung. "I'll have to ask him."

Of course, he was pondering on the answer all the time. But in case he wished to refuse my request, he could gracefully apologize for Chung's obvious stubbornness, and probably—with a certain amount of inward laughter—admit Chung's stupidity and various other defects of character.

So I was politely asked to wait while he consulted with Chung. Supposedly Chung was in an inner room seated at a desk. So "Chung" withdrew, conferred with himself, and soon returned with the answer. I expressed my deep appreciation, told "Chung" with great ease and sincerity what a wonderful man Chung was, and everybody was made happy, even "Chung's" secretary.

So always behind the scenes is the real power, obscure and unknown. But it does mean that he can walk the streets in peace, knowing the hired "front man" is going to take the cloying applause of the multitude and the outraged hisses of the unthinking.

It takes a strong soul, however, to deny himself the pleasures of a satisfied vanity. But perhaps there's a greater satisfaction in hugging to your bosom an amusing secret.

Books, so feel the Chinese, are primarily to be enjoyed. A book of poems, for example, is to be accepted at its face value, and what you as a reader bring to the thoughts of the poet out of your own experience is what matters. It is what the poem means to you. A book about a book the Chinese scholars do not quite understand.

## THE TALES THE OLD MEN TELL

As a young Chinese student once said to me, looking in amazement at a long row of reference books and texts about the plays of Shakespeare, "Why does one write a book about a book? If a book about a book must be written to make clear the meaning of the poet, why didn't the poet in the first place make his meaning clear? And why should a man write a book about another book? Why doesn't he write a book of his own?"

Those are difficult questions to answer. And I sometimes wonder if the overzealous attempts of our college professors at critical analysis and literary criticism don't destroy in our youths a genuine love of literature for its own sake. Better to enjoy a poem and not try to find out why, than to find out why and not enjoy the poem. Better even to attempt to write a poem yourself, even if it's a bad one.

That's what the Chinese do. And that's why the scholar is so highly honored. He is a creative artist if he is worth his salt, and not a critic and a self-conscious analyst of another's phrases.

When they tell a story that ends it. You may draw your own conclusions. Or you may add a phrase or an incident or two. You may even tell another story—one you have heard, or one of your own invention—to illustrate a point in the story already told.

To sit about and tell stories—that, in the Chinese way, is one of the real pleasures of living. I've heard many a tale told after midnight in Chinatown. At first from these elders I expected stories of their personal experiences—lurid tales of old Chinatown, the sort of thing one reads in the popular magazines. But that's not the sort of story told at all. That type of yarn is left

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

to the inventive genius of the writers of fiction. The tales the old men tell are stories of old China, stories with a meaning.

One evening a young Chinese, on whom fortune had but recently cast a favored smile, made the remark that life was so good he wanted to live forever. Whereupon one of the elders present told this tale of "The Apple of Everlasting Youth."

"It has to do," he said, "with the advisability of growing old gracefully."

Deep in the valley of Ho No Chu there grew in the garden of the Emperor, Ming Ah-Kee by name, a magic tree. And once every thousand years this tree, whose green leaves glistened like emeralds and whose trunk was the color of rusted bronze, bore an apple. Once every thousand years the tree had a single blossom, pink and white. Once every thousand years the tree bore one apple, golden and rose hued.

And the legend was that whoever ate of this apple would live for one thousand years and have everlasting youth. Thus went the legend and it was told to Ming Ah-Kee at the age of twenty when he ascended the throne of his fathers. Yet none of his royal ancestors had ever tasted the fruit of this tree.

For each time as the reigning Emperor had gone forth with great ceremony to pluck the apple, a thief in the night had been there first and stolen the magic fruit.

Ming Ah-Kee was determined that no such thing should happen to him. In twenty years, when he would be forty, the tree would again blossom and again bear

## THE TALES THE OLD MEN TELL

one apple. And Ming Ah-Kee was determined to eat of this apple and live one thousand years.

On his fortieth birthday a bud appeared. It blossomed, and a pink-and-white flower opened its petals to the sun. On the mountaintops drums were beaten, and at night lanterns were lighted in the courts of the royal palace. There was great rejoicing throughout the kingdom, for Ming Ah-Kee was beloved of all his people. Even the lowliest coolie was happy that he would eat the Apple of Everlasting Youth and reign over China for one thousand years.

Slowly the flower faded and as each petal fluttered to earth it was caught in a silken net and placed, untouched by human hands, in a delicately carved jar of jade. Swiftly the blossom began to give forth its fruit. And day by day the Emperor sat in the garden surrounded by his court, contemplating the green apple and pondering on the thought of immortality.

At last the apple was ripe. On the morrow Ming Ah-Kee would taste of the magic fruit. That night he placed guards about the tree. This time he was determined no thief should cheat him of everlasting youth.

During the night the earth and the stars were silent. There was no breeze from the snow-capped mountains to the west. There was no murmur from the sea far to the east. And no breath of air stirred across the valley to the north and the south.

But the leaves of the tree whispered to each other in the glow from the lanterns in the garden. They rustled faintly like the music of some old forgotten melody. All else was still.

The guards began to doze. The night was so silent

sleep crept upon them unawares. Suddenly one woke with a cry. A thief was climbing the great trunk of the tree. Huge bronze gongs were beaten in the garden. A clamor arose in the outer courtyards. And the thief was caught before his hand could touch the apple.

In the morning he was taken before the Emperor, bound hand and foot. By his side waited the Executioner with his sword red-stained. On a golden platter encrusted with precious jewels was the apple, more beautiful than the gems that sparkled in the morning light.

Before pronouncing the sentence of death upon the thief, Ming Ah-Kee turned to him.

"You are a very young man to be a thief," he said, and in truth the fellow appeared to be only twenty. "How old are you?"

"Four thousand years!" he said.

"Then it is you who has stolen each time the magic apple of my ancestors?"

"It is I," replied the thief.

The Emperor looked at him closely. His lips were smiling, but in his eyes was that tired unseeing look of a man who has seen too much.

"For four thousand years, you have seen wars and peace, famine and plenty, sorrows and rejoicings in the land?"

"I have," responded the thief.

"For four thousand years, you have seen your loved ones grow old and die, your sons become bent with age, and their sons' sons laid in the tomb of their ancestors?"

"I have."

For a long time the Emperor Ming meditated. Then

## THE TALES THE OLD MEN TELL

at last he said, "My years are forty. I am too old to feel the full lusty vigor of youth, and too young not to care. Should I remain forty forever I should see my wife wither and fade like a flower, my sons grow old and die. Would it not be better to have here in my court to counsel me and my descendants a man who has the wisdom of forty centuries, than that I should know the unnatural sorrows of a life for a thousand years? Untie the thief. Give him the apple."

And so the old men sit and tell countless tales like this. Sometimes their sons will tell a story, too. But they always preface their yarn with the qualifying comment, "I wouldn't believe this if my father hadn't told me."

And that's the way Jung started the story of the Jade Heart. To the Chinese, jade is more than a mere semi-precious stone. They believe it has qualities no other stone possesses.

Years ago in China, so the story runs as Jung told it, to one of his ancestors was born a baby daughter. As is customary friends of the family brought presents. A rich merchant gave as his gift a small jade heart on a gold chain.

"Let the little one always wear this," he said.

The family thanked him profusely. But they were secretly disappointed. For the merchant was very wealthy, and they had anticipated a much finer gift.

Every year the merchant came for a visit, and every year he asked if the daughter was wearing the jade heart. Being told she was he would smile and go his way satisfied. One day, when the daughter was six years

old, she was brought to him on his visit so he could see her. He was happy to find that she was wearing the jade heart on the gold chain about her neck. He looked at it closely, and then said, "She has had an accident."

"Oh, no," said the father.

"But she has," insisted the merchant stubbornly.

The amah, the nurse, was called in and questioned.

"No accident has befallen her," said the amah.

"And nothing has happened?" asked the merchant.

Then the amah, thinking it was of no consequence, told him that a few days previous, the daughter had been playing on the balcony, and had fallen to the ground below.

"It was nothing," said the amah. "For when I rushed down to pick her up, she was running about and playing uninjured."

"Yes," said the merchant. "I knew she had met with an accident. See—the jade heart is cracked."

Jung, in concluding this story, said, "And never again has any member of my family ever been critical of a gift. But I wouldn't believe this story," he added soberly, "if my father hadn't told it."

## THEY EAT SEAWEED

.....

EDDIE WU had invited us to his home for dinner. Three days before the date set, he called me up on the telephone.

"Have you a bicycle pump?" he asked.

"I'm sorry. No," I replied.

"I need one badly."

"What for?"

"I want to cook a duck!"

"Why not use a stove?" I suggested. "That's how we cook our ducks. How can you cook a duck with a bicycle pump?"

"You'll find out when you eat the duck Tuesday night," he answered laughingly. "Good-by. See you later," and he hung up.

Now if he needed a bicycle pump to cook a duck, he must have had a good and sufficient reason. And anyone who has ever eaten Chinese roast duck will know that reason. Never have I tasted such succulent, tender, juicy meat. It fairly melts in your mouth. And here's the way the Chinese cook their ducks. While this isn't exactly a recipe for a housewife, I do advise the next



time she has duck on the menu, first of all obtain a bicycle pump—and then proceed.

The manner in which we Occidentals cook roast fowl of any sort—and will the cooks please correct me if I'm wrong—is to stuff the interior with a dressing of dried bread crumbs containing, as it suits the fancy, oysters, chestnuts, sausage. The fowl is then thrust into an oven, with the juices dripping into the pan—and that makes gravy.

But the Chinese, being a stubborn race, proceed in just the opposite way. Into the interior they pour juices—perhaps some cinnamon, spices, and various flavorings. The duck, its interior rich with flavoring, is then sewed up so that none of the juices will escape. Then the duck is blown up with a bicycle pump until it is ready to burst. The outside is rubbed with sauces, particularly soy-bean sauce, which hardens the skin and gives the duck that rich, deep, reddish-brown color. Then the duck is roasted—and the juices kept inside the duck, not outside in the pan. The duck absorbs the water and that makes the meat moist and tender. The flavor of the duck goes back into the juices in its interior, and that makes gravy when the roasting is completed.

And that's the secret of cooking a duck with a bicycle pump, Chinese style.

To dine in the Chinese manner seems to me the highest form of civilized dining in existence, from the kitchen to the cash register. It is more than a recognition of the mere necessity of eating; it becomes not only an art but the perfect relaxation; the enjoyment of living par excellence.

Centuries have taught the patient Chinese that food properly prepared, properly served, and properly eaten—in the Chinese manner, of course—is the first of all aesthetic pleasures known to man. And to dine properly means you must give over an entire evening to the enjoyment of your dinner; never hurry, never rush, but smack your lips over each new dish and think only of the pleasures of the present moment.

Chinese food is the best in the world. Anybody who doubts this statement has never sat down to a four- or five-hour Chinese banquet, and run the gamut from seven-year-old eggs to shark's fin soup, tasted two or three of the more than one hundred different ways of cooking one defenseless chicken, beef and ginger with oyster sauce, a whole steamed fish covered with vegetables and candied seaweed, and any one of the other countless real Chinese dishes.

To make your start in the appreciation of Chinese food, you should begin, quite naturally, in the kitchen.

For what is served in the dining room is but the ultimate triumph of the poet who presides over the stove. While China has produced her great scholars and artists, the greatest poet of all and the one most highly honored is the cook. For his poetry becomes reality. A Chinese dish, properly prepared, must do three things: be beautiful to behold, tantalizing to the smell, and satisfying to the taste. It must appeal to all the senses, and only a genuine poet can satisfy all the senses at one and the same time.

And as the artist has his Pegasus on which to soar to dizzy heights, so has the cook his Pegasus—the kitchen stove. Above his stove hangs the God of the Kitchen.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

And often as not he'll burn joss sticks of fragrant incense to this god—a plain scroll on which is written in Chinese, "*Gee fon mg nong*," meaning, "May my rice never burn."

A cook in Chinatown told me there's a certain ritual to be observed in building a stove. All sides must be exactly the same, not too thick, nor yet too thin. And when rapped with a stick of wood, the stove should give forth music, and each side have the same merry tinkle.

The opening for the wood must be exactly in the center. He told me a story of his native village in China. There a man built a stove, but being a stubborn fellow, placed the opening to one side. His rice was never good, and the dishes his wife prepared never turned out satisfactorily. Unlike Confucius, who it is said divorced his wife because she was a bad cook—a reason wholly understandable to the Chinese—this man pondered over the matter. And so did his wife. But as usual with men who have made a mistake, he was loath to admit his error.

A wise man from the village came to the wife and whispered pearls of wisdom in her ear. The husband enjoyed sitting near the stove—on the side which was hottest. Now all sides of a properly built stove will give off the same amount of heat. So what did the wife do one day but tip over a pan of boiling water, scalding her husband's legs.

"Had you sat on the other side of the stove, which is never too hot, this would not have happened," she said.

He immediately saw the error of his way, rebuilt the stove, and henceforth lived happily ever after, because his rice was from then on always properly cooked.

## THEY EAT SEAWEED

A Chinese cook, being an artist, is paid accordingly. There is no standard rate of pay, but according to his artistry and the respect which he commands, a cook's salary is determined. And like all artists they are very temperamental, and are supreme masters of the kitchen. Their word there is final, even for the proprietor.

The first person to be hired in a Chinese restaurant is the cook. Among the Chinese a restaurant is often not called by its name, but is referred to as the "place of so-and-so *Tou Choo*," which means "head cook." It is said in Chinatown it is much easier to acquire wealth than to acquire a good cook. If you have a good cook, wealth follows as a matter of course. When in Chinatown you wish a really good dinner, go where the Chinese themselves dine. They know where the best cooks hang out their Kitchen Gods.

The interior of a Chinese kitchen is a model of cleanliness and neatness. No dish is ever cooked until the order for it has come from the dining room. So stacked about in orderly rows in the kitchen are baskets, *chom doy*, containing, all chopped up, the various ingredients that are to go into the dish when served. Water chestnuts in one *chom doy*, ginger in another, shrimps in another, and so on.

The cook, being a poet, often has an inspiration. From one *chom doy* he takes a handful of this, from another that; the various vegetables and meats, seasoned with sauces he has selected on the spur of the moment, are dropped into an iron pot over the fire, and cooked. Everything is mixed together—and that's a Chinese dish. Tonight you may have water chestnuts

and mushrooms with chicken and walnuts. Tomorrow something else again with chicken. You may ask for the dish you had last night and not get it. The cook, trusting to his inspiration, prepared a dish, and tonight he has forgotten just what he did mix up. But you'll get something just as good, if not better.

When the dish is cooked it is then served, with the juices of the meats and vegetables all poured into the porcelain bowl that is placed on the table. It is all freshly cooked, the raw cooking that our dietitians are advocating these days. It has been suggested to us as something new, but the Chinese have been doing it for generations.

Hence in a Chinese dinner, one dish will often be a well-rounded meal: meats, vegetables, and all, and who knows what delicious morsel lies buried in the sauce at the bottom of the bowl?

I am speaking, of course, of real Chinese food, not chop suey or chow mein.

Once Eddie Wu said to me, "Let's go uptown some night and have dinner in a Chop Suey Palace. I want to see what chow mein tastes like."

He wasn't joking. He had never eaten it. Most Americans think there are only two Chinese dishes, chop suey and chow mein, with a possible third, pepper steak. These dishes originated in this country, and in a sense aren't Chinese at all. Certainly the Chinese themselves never eat them.

Who first introduced chop suey to the American public is open to some debate. I've heard two stories on the origin of this dish. Probably both are true.

One story, which is told by Charles Dobie in one of

## THEY EAT SEAWEED

his books on the early days of the gold rush in California, concerns some hungry miners. It was late at night. All the restaurants were closed save one, a Chinese restaurant where only the Chinese ate. Up to this time no American had ever had the courage—or the foresight—to attempt Chinese food. But a hungry man will eat what's set before him.

The Chinese, harassed by floods, tortured by famines, of necessity have been forced to eat almost anything—even seaweed. But they have learned to make unattractive-looking vegetables—and meats, too—palatable. It's usually the sauce that does it, just the right seasoning for the right food. And that's the reason Chinese food is so delicious. Sometime try seaweed soup. I think you'll like it.

So these hungry miners years ago in San Francisco trooped into the Chinese restaurant and demanded to be fed. They were. The Chinese cook took what had been left over from their own regular dinner of that day, seasoned it properly, and served it.

The famished miners found it good food. Certainly the dish given them was well cooked.

"What is this called?" they asked the cook.

He scratched his head. What he had given them was leftovers. And there's but one Chinese word for that, "Chop suey." This translated means "Hash." And that was what he had served the miners that night—hash.

But the miners came back for more, and San Francisco soon learned to like this Chinese "hash." And the wise Chinese, seeing there was a profit to be made and no doubt saying to themselves, "If that's what the Americans like, that's what they'll get," started serving

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

chop suey. This simple dish has today made many a fortune for restaurant owners in this country.

The other story of the origin of chop suey is told about His Excellency Li Hung-Chang, the Premier from China who visited this country on a good-will tour in 1896. Many banquets were given in his honor, and he was wined and dined wherever he went. Returning the compliments paid him, he too entertained at dinner.

Being a wise man and a philosopher, he had brought his own cook along with him in his party. And he thought it might be a nice courtesy to let his guests see what Chinese cooking was like. But he was also a modest man, and he wasn't quite certain those he invited to dine with him would enjoy the Chinese delicacies he had brought from China: dried meats, sharks' fins, birds' nests, and one thing and another. So he dined on these in secret—and his Chinese dinners were far more secret than his secret diplomacy.

For the dinners he gave to his American hosts he had his cook prepare American foods in the Chinese manner. That is, American meats and vegetables, chopped up, and served with appropriate sauces. And he named it chop suey, because it was a combination of mixed foods.

No matter how it originated, we all know how popular it has become. It contains good, solid nourishment, and if well cooked will please the most discriminating diner. However, once you have tasted real Chinese dishes, you don't exactly crave chop suey any more.

To those who have an adventurous palate, and a willingness to try anything once, no matter how exotic,

## THEY EAT SEAWEED

dinner Chinese style with real Chinese dishes once experienced is never forgotten. I don't know how many times I've had dinner in Chinatown, and each time I've had a new dish of some sort. And there'll be more to come as I have dinner there again.

It was Eddie Wu who first introduced me to dining in Chinese style. He also explained the customs and the good manners involved.

There were six of us that night. We sat down. There wasn't a menu in sight. Eddie held up a few fingers to the waiter, and dinner was ordered. A very simple process. The Chinese order dinner, not by the number of persons present but by the table. Eddie had held up five fingers. That meant he had ordered a \$5 dinner. And it didn't matter how many persons there were in our party. One of them could have left, yet the price for the dinner would still have been \$5. One or two more persons could have joined our party of six. The price would still have been \$5. He had ordered \$5 worth of food, and it didn't matter in the least how many people ate it.

Nor did he select the dishes. That was left to the cook in the kitchen, who knows more about it than Eddie does, anyway. He knows what supplies are on hand, what delicacies are in season. However, Eddie could have asked for one dish—his favorite. And around that dish the cook would have prepared \$5 worth of food.

Once, later, I ordered dinner and asked for a very expensive dish. I got it, but not many other dishes came with the dinner. On another occasion I asked for a very simple, inexpensive dish, and got more dishes that time



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

than I had bargained for. No matter what price you set, you'll get an honest return in your dinner.

I find, if one wishes some of the delicacies, even though the restaurant may advertise dinners for fifty-five cents, that it's best to let the average price per person present range from seventy-five cents to a dollar. That is, for four persons, a \$3 dinner. You can, if you like, make it \$4 or even \$5. The higher you go, the better food you get, and the greater the number of delicacies.

On the back of a menu before me—prepared for the American trade—is a "Specimen Banquet Table" for ten persons, and the price is \$25. In smaller type at the bottom it says, "Other banquet tables in prices from \$15 to \$50."

But should you order a banquet for ten persons for \$25, have some consideration for the cook. Give him three or four days' notice. A Chinese dinner is judged not by the quantity of food served you, but the quality. And a cook takes a day or two to roast a duck, remove the bones without breaking the skin, soak it in honey and cinnamon and place on the table before you that famous dish "boneless duck." Should you order a \$50 dinner, give the cook two or three weeks' notice. The higher the price, the longer time it takes.

Save at banquets the dinner is served you all at once. There's a compromise, however, for Americans. We are given soup with which to start the meal. The Chinese prefer their soup at the conclusion of the meal. It washes down the dinner!

So there you are, with your whole meal on the table, and from then on the race is to the swift, and the battle

to the heartiest gourmand. It's rather nice to have the whole dinner facing you. And it's quite a civilized way to eat, it seems to me. It's a perfect saving of face for both the host and the guest.

How many times have all of us dined out, and how often our charming hostess has said, beaming, "I like to see people eat—it shows I'm a good cook," and then thrust upon you another helping, which you have to down, somehow or other, despite the fact that you are already stuffed to the brim.

And how many times do you have to have another helping of ham when you are so sick of ham you can't look another slice in the face. But not so with the Chinese host. On the table before you are four or five or more dishes. A variety, too: chicken, fish, and something of everything. There it all is—yours for the taking. Should there be one dish you don't like, you merely avoid it and say nothing. Nor does your avoidance embarrass your Chinese host. For you can make your dinner from something you do like, and this will give him pleasure. He never says, "Have some more of this." He thoughtfully lets you alone. If there isn't anything you like, you nibble at your rice bowl—and it's your own fault. But there's usually at least one dish you'll find palatable.

With a true Chinese dinner there are no plates. In the center of the table are the various dishes. In your right hand you hold your chopsticks, in your left hand your rice bowl. You reach into the dish you prefer with your chopsticks, pick up lightly the particular morsel you desire, dip it gracefully into your rice bowl, and then into your mouth.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

There is, however, an etiquette to be observed. The part of the food in the dish nearest to you is your area of attack. It's bad manners to pick food from the oppo-



site side of the dish. It may shock your finer instincts at first to have everybody eating from the same dish. But it's perfectly sanitary, for being correct with the use of chopsticks you really touch only the food you pick up. You never scoop.

## THEY EAT SEAWEED

There's a philosophical reason for everybody eating out of the same dish. Having a common bowl lends a spirit of fraternity to a Chinese dinner, arousing the feeling that we are all of one family. It tends, so my friends say, to give more satisfaction and brings all those dining at the same table into a closer union of good fellowship; just as community singing is more fun than each man singing in a corner by himself.

If you wish more sauces than are already in the food, these are in little sauce dishes about the table; a chutney for chicken and duck, fried salt for squab, plum sauce with mustard for beef, and for almost anything the inevitable soy sauce. Each guest, however, has his own soy sauce. There's where dining Chinese style may be unsanitary, I'm told, dipping a bit of meat into someone else's soy sauce.

Eating with chopsticks, I also feel, is much more civilized than knives and forks. It reduces the effort of eating to the minimum. Then, too, with a Chinese dinner you have but one pair of chopsticks to worry about all evening. There isn't that frightening array of forks and spoons found at our formal dinners. And you don't have to stop and think whether you select the forks from the outside and work in, or from the inside and work out.

And it's because of chopsticks, anyway, that we now use that barbarous instrument, the fork. If it hadn't been for the civilized Chinese we of the Western world would today still be eating with our fingers. It was Marco Polo who brought back chopsticks to Italy. At that time our ancestors were scooping food out of bowls

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

with their fingers, and tearing a chicken limb from limb in picnic fashion.

He displayed his chopsticks to the Italians, and showed them how they are used. And then it was that either an inventive Italian or a lazy one put a metal prong on the end of a chopstick so that he could stab the bit of food he wanted. And that was the way forks started.

I wish the Italians had let well enough alone. I'd much rather use chopsticks than a fork. You need only one hand. One chopstick is held firmly between the thumb and the first finger and braced by the second finger. The other chopstick is balanced by the thumb and the third and fourth fingers. You wiggle the third finger, and that's all there is to it. Have a Chinese waiter show you the next time you dine in Chinatown.

Sometimes when we dine with our Chinese friends in their homes, they bring out what is to them the family silver—solid ivory chopsticks, which have been handed down from one generation to the next. Some are tipped with silver, and occasionally some are engraved with appropriate verses praising food, nature, and all that's lovely. The Chinese name for chopsticks is *kuai tzu*.

In China, they tell me, there is a certain etiquette about chopsticks. A Chinese gentleman always carries with him his own pair in a leather case. So when he dines out in a restaurant, he brings forth his own chopsticks. Ivory is preferred, for ivory, it is said, will turn black if the food is poisoned. But when dining at a friend's house, naturally you trust him, and hence use the chopsticks he lays at your place.

Once when we were dining in Chinatown with some

friends, a patronizing Englishwoman, experimenting with chopsticks for the first time, was slightly perturbed. She visioned, I believe, the many dinners that had been eaten with this same pair she held in her hand.

"Do they ever wash them?" she asked.

A Chinese friend who was with us replied, "Do you ever wash your knives and forks?"

One nice thing about a Chinese dish, containing meats cooked with the vegetables in a rich sauce, is that as the meal progresses, and the top part of the dish is consumed, you will find at the bottom nice tidbits which have been soaking in the juices, and therefore much tastier. So the real fun of a Chinese dinner begins when you are stuffed to capacity. You can then pick as you please, select a choice morsel, rich in flavor, and, as a perfect gourmet, enjoy the food not for the sake of nourishment but for the taste alone.

But there are some Chinese foods—rare delicacies—that are quite tasteless, odorless, and colorless. Like "whale's belly," for example, or what we might call tripe. It's tough and chewy, but the Chinese put it in soup and eat it because it gives pleasure to the sense of touch; nibbling on it you have a feeling of resistance.

"It gives good exercise to the teeth," as one Chinese put it.

Bird's nest soup, *yen-wor-tong*, is among my favorite dishes. And how often have I been saddened by people shying away from this real delicacy. I have found it wiser when dining with my American friends to let them have the soup, and when they gush over how wonderful it is, then to tell them what they've eaten.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

So many people think it's a whole bird's nest. It really isn't at all. It's a gelatinous substance found in an internal organ of a swallow. It looks like tapioca. You buy a box of this dried gelatinous stuff, soak it per directions, then make a clear chicken broth, and into this broth drop the gelatinous substance. On top you spread a little ground ham, some red pepper, and there is bird's nest soup.

A Chinese banquet is the last word in perfect dining. And, as usual, everything from the arrival of the first guest to the conclusion is done differently. At our formal parties, we gulp down a cocktail or two, and are then rushed unceremoniously to the table. The wife of a friend is at our left, the wife of another friend, or a flirtatious, unmarried female of uncertain years, at our right—and between bites of food we are supposed to entertain them with our stored-up fund of wit and wisdom. Then after dinner comes that deadly hour for any hostess, when the guests, plump with food and drowsy with too much meat and drink, would rather, more than anything else, take off their shoes, put their feet up, and fall asleep. But that is the time the hostess expects us to be at our very intellectual best, and carry on prolonged and sparkling conversations.

I like the Chinese way better. When the guests arrive, eager and expectant, with carefully thought out and rehearsed bon mots to distribute, that's the time for conversation. Cocktails—or Chinese drinks—and Chinese hors d'oeuvres, pieces of ginger, spicy cakes, and bits of seven-year-old eggs are served. Everybody is at his sparkling best. Invited for seven o'clock, you may chat for two or three hours. You say what you have to say, and

## THEY EAT SEAWEED

about the time you've told all your best stories, dinner is served. At its conclusion, groggy with food, wisdom and wit exhausted, you get up quickly from the table, say good night to your host and hostess, and swiftly depart. If you fall asleep immediately after dinner, your hostess never knows it.

All the men sit together at one table, and the women at another. The food is before you. You enjoy that. If you want to talk you may. If you don't want to utter a word, that's all right, too. But you don't have to sparkle with a woman not your wife.

"I don't understand the Americans," a Chinese once said to me. "At their dinner parties each man is supposed to entertain another man's wife. What's the matter? Can't he entertain and amuse his own wife?"

A banquet differs somewhat from an ordinary dinner. The dishes are served one at a time. In your hand is an empty bowl. Rice is not always served, and it comes at the conclusion of the meal. Then it is brought in just in case you haven't already had enough to eat. But after twenty or more dishes, rice becomes a symbol only, and not a dire necessity. You have several dishes, and then a soup is offered you. More dishes, another soup—and thus it goes. You get a few nibbles of this, a few nibbles of that, and the dishes are so varied in a perfect menu that one flavor balances another. At the conclusion, of course, that sweet almond soup, or a thick broth flavored with lichee nuts. What poet thought of that ending for a meal I don't know. But I do know a monument should be erected to his memory! For it calms the spirit, settles the mountain of food you have consumed, quiets the digestion, and sends you



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

home at last to peaceful slumbers, with no thoughts of your usual midnight dose of bicarbonate of soda.

Should there be food uneaten at a Chinese dinner you can, if you so desire, take it home with you. In fact it is rather expected of you. In every Chinese restaurant containers are kept, and at the conclusion of your dinner, the food left over is neatly packed up for you. It's your food. You've paid for it. So take it home with you for tomorrow quite openly and unashamed. It pleases the cook, too.

There's yet another Chinese custom with which I am thoroughly in accord.

One day my friend Huang-Nai called me on the telephone and said gaily, "I'm coming up for dinner tonight."

I covered the receiver with my hand and turned to my wife, "It's Alfred E. Wang," I said, using his American name. "He wants to come to dinner."

She nodded her consent, so I said, "Fine—come along."

"I'm bringing five friends with me," he continued. I looked at my wife, raised a questioning eyebrow and transmitted the bad news.

She groaned. "Six of them—I can't. It's four o'clock now—I have no groceries—and a dinner for that many—I don't see how—" she protested.

I started to stutter an excuse, but Wang interrupted me by saying, "I'll be there an hour or so early. Coming right away. Tell the missus not to cook anything. Just get out the pots and pans. I'm bringing the dinner—and I'm going to cook it. Good-by. See you soon."

And he hung up. That's the Chinese way of coming

## THEY EAT SEAWEED

to dinner. It's rather a nice way, too. Invite yourself to dinner at a friend's house, buy and cook the dinner for him, and bring along a group of your friends, too. It means two hosts at one party, and everybody has a good time.

So shortly before five o'clock Wang arrived, bringing with him four packages, and a bundle of chopsticks. Out of these four packages he managed to prepare eight different dishes. I don't know how he did it, but he did. Chinese sleight-of-hand, I suppose. But there was no cutting up of vegetables, no chopping up of meat. It had all been done beforehand. And all Wang had to do was to mix up the food, cook it, serve it, and there we were.

So whenever my Chinese friends invite themselves to dinner at my house, I'm delighted. It means no preparation, nothing to do but enjoy myself—and they are having a lot of fun, too.

## DRINKS ON THE HOUSE

.....

ONE September I was off on one of my periodic jaunts to direct a community theater in the sunny South. I would be gone from home until June. So my Chinese friends thought it would be an appropriate gesture to give me a farewell banquet. Six o'clock was the appointed hour. The plan was to start early and end late. We had wine with our dinner, too. A simple wine called *Mui Kwe Lu*. It is by all odds my favorite liquor.

After dinner, with more bottles of *Mui Kwe Lu* under our arms, we all adjourned to my apartment, and settled down for an evening of hilarious leave-taking.

*Mui Kwe Lu* is subtle and insidious. Compounded with a base of rice—the Chinese use rice where we fall back upon corn, rye, and other grains—it is flavored with crushed rose petals, no less. Then it is left to stand for fifteen years. It sounds exotic and peculiar. But far from being aesthetic, it is a two-fisted he-man's drink, and has a way of sneaking up on you and is more potent than any Scotch or gin can ever hope to be.

It has a totally different effect, too. Our liquors are

## DRINKS ON THE HOUSE

head. Too much is too much, as a headache the morning after will testify. An unnatural gay hilarity follows overindulgence, fights may result, and raw whisky often jangles our nerves until everything in life is twisted into cross purposes.

But Chinese liquors work just the other way. They soothe and relax. At first, there's a rosy glow. Then troubles fly out the window. A philosophical detachment and a calm spirit rule your small world. The desire to chat in a friendly manner about things seen and things unseen makes conversation easy—and then you gracefully fall asleep. It's the art of drinking consummated in a friendly, effortless manner.

So that night we sat about, each with a glass in his hand, sipping the wine and chatting quietly about world problems and individual reactions. For their amusement I showed my Chinese friends something I had run across the day before while packing. It was a temperance pledge I had signed when I was ten years old. Without giving it much thought at the time I had signed on the dotted line. It was pure emotionalism on my part. I have since seen the error of my ways.

They had never seen such a pledge before, and were intrigued. We discussed with a vicarious tenderness the evils of drinking. Then I laid the pledge on my desk and refilled their glasses.

As I have said, *Mui Kwe Lu* has a soothing effect. Conversation gallops along at first, then slowly subsides. There comes a time when it ceases altogether, and you are lost in your own dreams of a rosy, happy world.

I woke up at eleven o'clock. I had fallen fast asleep. About me in chairs sat my friends, some snoring, others

dozing in bliss and peace. It was early yet. I refilled their glasses, returned to my chair, and relaxed.

About one o'clock I woke up again. I was quite alone. My Chinese friends must have been aroused in the meantime. They had all quietly slipped away lest they disturb my slumber. But pinned on my coat was the temperance pledge I had once signed, and beneath it their farewells to me: wishes for a happy time away from home, and a speedy return. And on the mantel they had left a bottle of *Mui Kwe Lu* for me to take along with me.

That, believe it or not, is a somewhat typical Chinese "brawl." And the beauty of Chinese liquor is that no matter how much you may have had the night before, the next morning—after a peaceful slumber—you wake up. You remember. You hit your head a couple of times, wonder why you have no headache, and then refreshed and sane you go about your business as if nothing had happened.

Rarely does one see an intoxicated Chinese. They know how to drink, and their drinks are not made for the purpose of stimulating excitement and rowdy spirits.

Not so long ago there was an editorial in the *New York Times* saying how a Chinese laundryman established a precedent by asking the police to arrest him because he had been intoxicated. "It is said," continued the story, "that a search of court records here for over a hundred years failed to reveal the conviction of any other Chinese on a similar charge."

Even searching the Federal Bureau of Investigation "Uniform Crime Reports," you will find for 1936 that

## DRINKS ON THE HOUSE

in this country there were some 72,729 arrests for drunkenness, both male and female, among all races. The white predominated by a shameful total of 58,070. But of the whole number only twelve were Chinese. In 1937 the number of arrests mounted to 85,077, but there were only two more Chinese, or a total of fourteen. The Chinese truly are a temperate race!

I asked Eddie Wu why he thought this was so, and he replied, "We Chinese never drink for escape. We drink only for pleasure and enjoyment, and usually only with our meals. To drink for escape from the problems that confront us we consider economically wrong and philosophically awkward."

Being taught composure and to repress their feelings from early youth, anything like liquor that would make them forget their good manners is looked at askance. The possibilities of what one might do in public under the influence of too much wine, losing one's self-control and the attendant display of bad manners, is a point to consider seriously. To appear drunk in public would make a Chinese forever after the subject of much ridicule.

If they must drink it is usually done at home, behind closed doors, like the Southern gentleman, who is in disgrace if seen drunk in public. Drinking, with the Chinese, is a pastime for one's leisure hours and well-filled pocketbook.

With some Chinese friends I attended a party at which American drinks were served in profusion. Several had a little bit too much. They were unusually hilarious—even for Chinese. But friends took them home before that fatal hour of indifferent behavior.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

It was the first time I have ever seen any of my Chinese friends too much "under the weather." And I think it will be the last time. How do I know? Because a few nights later, when the effects had all worn off, and the sober thoughts of the "morning after" had made them realize they had lost face, there was a telephone call.

"Going to be home tonight?" was the request from one of my friends who had been on the party.

When I responded that I was, he said, "We're coming up. Bringing a couple of bottles of Scotch along. We want to do a little serious drinking."

I groaned to myself. The memories of the party still lingered, I was repentant and "on the wagon."

But that evening all those who had been overindulgent at the party arrived, bringing with them an ample supply of Scotch. We sat around and talked, each with a man-sized glass at his elbow. But not a drink was touched.

There stood temptation. There were the drinks. There were my Chinese friends, refusing to indulge, and showing me by their example that self-control was a virtue, and their overindulgence of the other evening something they wished to forget. It was their way of apologizing for having so far forgot themselves on the other occasion as to take one drink too many.

After they had left, eight untouched drinks stood about the room. What happened to them is nobody's business but my own.

Personally I wouldn't mind if all the Scotch and rye—and particularly gin—would be thrown into the river tomorrow. I'd never miss it. But I do hope that now

## DRINKS ON THE HOUSE

and then I may sample a Chinese wine during dinner.

My first experience with Chinese liquors started one summer evening in Chinatown. I had been having dinner with some of my friends. Afterwards those who had engagements drifted away. Only Chung-Yi and myself remained to talk things over. We were in no hurry. The evening was yet young, and Chung-Yi was trying to teach me Chinese. Outside tourists flocked the streets, peering in at us as we sat sipping our tea over the remains of the dinner in an open booth by the window.

The subject of Chinese liquor came up, and after I had confessed that I had never tasted any, Chung-Yi decided that the time and the place were the present. So off he trotted and came back with a bottle of Chinese wine.

"Wine" is used to designate any Chinese liquor. And I'd say, after sampling my first drink, that it isn't like a wine at all. It's more in the cordial class. You don't drink Chinese wines. You sip them. That's why at banquets when liquor is served the wine-cups are small, each one holds little more than one good sip. Of course, they can be filled as often as desired.

The first impression is of a sort of musty taste. But it's the aftereffects that matter, the recurrent flavor that comes from the polite Chinese smacking of one's lips. It's a cultivated taste—like olives. But after the first experience—and your survival—the rest is easy.

From that time on I have sampled a number of different Chinese wines. They are all flavored with flowers, fruits, and herbs. You can if you like have something reminiscent of roses, lotus, jasmine, or what you please. There's one called *Kwai Far Sein Le*, flavored



with the essence of many flowers. The name translated means "Flowery Path." Among the most popular to our taste is *Ng Ka Py*, or "The Essence of Five Peels," including oranges and other fruits. I also like a pear wine, called *Lan Fa Lu*. It has a delicate, elusive bouquet.

For apparent ills of any sort there's Tiger Bone wine, called *Fu Kwat*. This is made, as are all their wines, in China. A tiger bone is cleaned and thrown into a vat of wine and left until it has dissolved. It's good for rheumatism and is very expensive. There's another one, *Gop Guy*, also medicinal and very good for your health. But it too is expensive, because it is difficult to make. A translation of *Gop Guy* means "The Spotted Lizard Wine." The lizards are dried in the sun, after being cleaned, and then put into the wine. In about ten years they have completely dissolved in the alcohol and then the wine is ready to be sampled. It's good for the kidneys, I've been told.

I've tasted both these wines. I confess to liking them. They have the mellow flavor of a hearty tonic, a nicely prepared cure for all ills. Perhaps here is one reason the Chinese are not drunkards. Imagine a jag on "Spotted Lizard Whisky."

But they do say that on a cold winter day a couple of drinks of Tiger Bone will keep you warm all day long. Take it the first thing in the morning, however. You won't need another drink until the next cold morning.

Despite this, I am enchanted with Chinese wines, although I must confess I do not indulge frequently in

Tiger Bone and Spotted Lizard. They are much too expensive for me.

But after several sessions with Chung-Yi tasting the various kinds of liquors, I felt I had made a personal discovery. Here was something new. The pioneer spirit seized me, and I was determined that nothing should stop me until we had introduced these rare old wines of another world bouquet to an unsuspecting American public.

Chung-Yi and I spent many an evening talking it over. Our enthusiasm grew. As it happened I had a friend who was an assistant manager of a well-known New York hotel. We discussed the opening of a Chinese cocktail bar, and finally the idea was approved, and a corner of their cocktail lounge given us for our noble experiment.

But to serve our American friends Chinese liquor straight from the bottle would never do. We couldn't picture a tired dowager, seeking relaxation with her exacting escort, asking for a "Spotted Lizard Highball."

But Chung-Yi knew the answer. He had kept concealed up his sleeve all the time the proper answer. Somewhere in an historic past, his ancestors had been wine tasters to the then ruling Emperor. And the recipes for mixing these wines with suitable fruit juices had been handed down in his family for generations. And each drink, so he told me, had a story connected with it.

So Chung-Yi and I had to select a few of these Chinese mixed drinks with which to start on our way to wealth and a dubious fame.

He came to my apartment one day with bottles of

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

liquors of all descriptions, an assortment of fruit juices—and it was up to me to say which ones I liked best. We'd take some *Ng Ka Py*, for example, and mix it with pineapple juice, orange juice, lemon juice, lime juice, and the juice of dragon's eyes—or canned lichee nuts. Each one was put in a tiny bottle and labeled. We stood them in neat rows on the mantel, on my desk, and on the table. And we sampled each one of the numerous bottles.

We started fairly early in the morning, and by dinnertime we weren't able to distinguish one from the other. When our wives joined us for dinner, we offered the drinks for their superior judgment. But unhappily, after two sips and one look at us, the wives rebelled and insisted on dinner—and that quickly.

However, for three days Chung-Yi and I continued, with the true thoroughness of experimenting chemists, mixing and sampling drinks. In the end we ultimately drew lots to select the six Chinese cocktails that we would offer the public. The reason for this was that we couldn't make up our minds which ones we liked best.

The assistant manager sampled the drinks with us one afternoon, and declared that nothing had ever tasted quite like these before. By the time anyone has had six Chinese cocktails in quick succession, a true confession comes easy.

Little announcements were printed and distributed to a select gathering of connoisseurs for the grand opening of the bar. These announcements contained not only the original Chinese names of these drinks but also the English translation of the meaning, and the story behind the origin. *Tsin Fu Lu* meant "Flower of

## DRINKS ON THE HOUSE

Heaven." The others were "Autumn Glow" (*Chiu Gam*), "The Three Seasons" (*Shan Tsin Tse*), "Moon Lady" (*Shang Ngau*), "Breath of Desire" (*Hse Tsing*)—which most lady patrons insisted that their male escorts sample freely—and "Tiger Passion" (*Tsang Fu*)—which the ladies themselves found most to their liking.

These were the six chosen as a starter. We could have had fifty to seventy-five others just as fancy.

Perhaps you may be curious to know the story back of *Hse Tsing*, or "Breath of Desire." This is it:

In the sunken garden of the Emperor there often walked a maiden by the name of Po Nguk, or Precious Jade. One evening the Emperor as he was watching the swans being fed saw her for the first time. Her beauty and her loveliness stirred in him the desire to possess her. But when he was told she was only the humble gardener's daughter, he knew he could never bring her into his royal household. And yet his longing for her was so strong he spent many nights in torment. Finally when he could endure this no longer, and wishing to possess her, even though it was only in his dreams, he brewed a drink out of the essence of subtle herbs and fruits and named it "Breath of Desire."

The other drinks had somewhat similar stories. Of course the unthinking, reading these stories, were tempted to make jokes and puns, but they sampled the various drinks and came back for more, and that was the sole purpose in telling these legends.

For this occasion Chung-Yi selected another name. It's a Chinese custom. All poets, for instance, and Chinese scholars have several names besides their family name. They take a literary name, or *nom de plume*, a flow-

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

ery name of their own selection, something fancy to signify their achievements or significant experiences. And so Chung-Yi, for this occasion, dubbed himself Hoh Tse-Lo—and that's what I've called him ever since.

Concerning the opening of this bar I can't help but quote from a newspaper story in the *New York Post* written by Archer Winsten. He said:

"This afternoon there is a cocktail party at the E—marking the end of six months of negotiation which have brought Hoh Tse-Lo to preside over the new Chinese Cocktail Bar there.

"It is written that one thousand and one hundred years before Christ, three brothers called Kang, Li and Hoh came out of Tartary to conquer Canton and brought with them strange liquors to set themselves up again after a hard day's conquering. One of these brothers was the ancestor of the above-mentioned Hoh Tse-Lo, and the intervening generations have neither let the ancient secrets die nor have they revealed the formulae to the public.

"It is also written (by the hotel historians), that another ancestor was Li Po, the famous poet, who lived seven hundred years before America was discovered. He was drowned in a lily pond at the age of sixty-one, when, slightly intoxicated from one of the family mixtures, he reached for the shadow of the moon there and toppled in. It is written that another drink was composed in honor of this event, and it is called 'The Poet Sees His Reflection in the Pool.' The more you think about that name for a drink the better it sounds. For a stronger drink, perhaps you might create the name,

## DRINKS ON THE HOUSE

'The Poet Falls Down in the Middle of the Street and Can't Get Up.'

"Hoh Tse-Lo mixes other drinks, the fables of which are appended below. [And here he quoted some of the stories.] Some of these things should be made into movies, especially the titles, but it's not up to this department to give away tips for nothing to big corporations. . . .

"Once upon a time, ten years ago, when nobody drank, several princes, holy men, and undergraduates came together to invent a time-saving drink. They created a thing which was called '*Hh Ng Hh*,' or 'The Thunderbolt.' Made by pouring pure alcohol over chopped ice. Somehow, whenever cocktails are mentioned, I think of that."

It is obvious that the writer of this article did not take the Chinese Cocktail Bar seriously. However, it told the story to the public, and the bar had a grand opening day.

One corner of the Cocktail Lounge was fixed up in Chinese fashion. Tapestries and scrolls were hung in profusion, and Chinese lanterns were suspended from the ceiling. We also strung up some tiny bells, which, if shaken when nobody was looking made a nice, tinkly sound and went a long way toward creating the right atmosphere.

I am certain the bar would have been a great success. That it closed after only one week was not because of the public's failure to respond to these exotic drinks. Nor was it the fault of the hotel management, nor of Hoh Tse-Lo.

It was just one of those things; two different methods

of approach, and neither quite understanding the other's viewpoint.

The morning of the first day, for example, Hoh Tse-Lo phoned me in great excitement.

"I've got to have a live pig for the opening this afternoon," he said.

"What for?" I asked.

"It's the custom of my family," he said. "On every occasion when we start on a new venture, we sacrifice a small but live pig. Some families don't observe this custom, but mine does! It's very necessary I have a live pig to sacrifice before the bar!"

I took a long, deep breath. I pictured the scene. The Cocktail Lounge of a prominent hotel and the lobby beyond. A Chinese walking through carrying a live pig. The anticipated sacrifice, the burning of incense, the attendant rites. But I also somehow pictured the pig getting out of the clutches of my friend—dashing through the lobby—trying to hide under the skirts of trembling dowagers—the rush of bellhops to the rescue—and my bet, ten to one, that the pig would be greased—palms being upset, tables overturned—screams from the guests—a riot call for the police—and Hoh Tse-Lo, the cocktail bar, the pig, and myself and all the liquor dumped unceremoniously into the street.

But I said gently into the telephone, "I'm coming right down to Chinatown. We must talk this over."

I spent an hour pleading with Hoh Tse-Lo. He saw my point, but it took a lot of persuasion on my part. However, at last he came to a compromise.

"I'll sacrifice a paper pig," he said. "It will mean the same thing, anyway."

## DRINKS ON THE HOUSE

That afternoon, just before the bar was ready to open, he appeared upon the scene. He was clad in Chinese costume, a long black silk gown, his trousers of Chinese silk, also, gathered tightly about his ankles in his white socks, and on his feet satin slippers. He wore a Chinese skull-fitting cap on his head. But he appeared to be fatter than I had ever seen him. Then I discovered the reason. He had padded his stomach with a pillow.

In China a plump stomach is something to be proud of. It means you have great wealth: plenty to eat, plenty to drink, and never exercise.

Hoh Tse-Lo made his ceremonies before the bar. He burned incense, kowtowed three times, and holding aloof a piece of red paper on which was written in Chinese characters, "A live pig," he stabbed it with his finger, and the sacrifice was made.

Guests appeared, all eager to sample these, new to them but old to China, cocktails. One of our Chinese friends, also in Chinese costume, assisted Hoh Tse-Lo at the bar. Hoh Tse-Lo himself acted as a sort of master of ceremonies. He went from table to table, greeting the guests and politely inquiring if they would care to try one of the Chinese drinks. But far from giving them a "sales talk" he warned them, in an amusing fashion, against trying either "Tiger Passion" or "Breath of Desire." This, of course, was perfect, for it aroused curiosity, and was but a subtle way of saying that the drinks were potent. When the guests would insist, Hoh Tse-Lo would sigh, and sadly in Chinese give a word to our friend at the bar. The drink would then appear



at the table, and Hoh Tse-Lo would smile and wish the drinker much happiness.

The most popular drink of them all proved to be "Autumn Glow"—and although I am giving away a secret, it was the simplest to prepare and contained the least expensive of liquors. It was made of a certain wine, ginger ale, and a half of a squeezed lemon. A nice, fruity drink; and several of these produced more glows than any autumn at its very best.

Occasionally during the week, Hoh Tse-Lo would retire to the men's room to meditate. At first I thought it was an act he was putting on. But I soon discovered there was an obvious reason. The pillow, which gave him such a prosperous air, had the habit of slipping. His meditations—and he always apologized to the guests for his enforced absence—was for an adjustment of the symbol of his wealth and well-being. But his meditations never lasted for long, and he would always return smiling and gracious and do his best to persuade the curious from sampling the Chinese cocktails handed down for generations from some secret drinkers in walled gardens where the temple bells tinkled merrily in the breeze.

Every afternoon I was on hand. My liquor bill that week was higher than it has ever been before or since. We had two more days left that first week when the manager sent for me in great dismay.

Nothing, it seemed, checked. As you know, in all big hotels every toothpick must be accounted for. Every olive is numbered. And every bottle of liquor contains just so many drinks. Each bottle is checked downstairs in the storeroom. And from each bottle, the bartender

## DRINKS ON THE HOUSE

is supposed to serve just so many drinks. These are checked as they are passed across the bar. And the number of bottles consumed must check with the amount of cash in the cash register at the end of the day. Sixteen drinks to the bottle—although some bartenders can manage eighteen, I'm told. Sixteen drinks to the paying customers. Each drink measured by an experienced eye—no more, no less. In the end it's two and two always making four.

But with the Chinese bar, nothing checked. The liquor purchased in Chinatown at so much a bottle should have made so many drinks, with just the right amount in the cash register. But not a single bottle came out straight. From some too many drinks had been poured, from others not enough.

I spoke to Hoh Tse-Lo about this. He gave me at first a bland look of perfect innocence—but he ultimately confessed.

Sensitive, as all of us are, in his trips from table to table, he often found genial souls, friendly people, who were as polite to him as he was to them. At other tables, the temptation of drinkers to make a joke at his expense, to let loose a barbed wisecrack, was something that a youthful mind could not resist. But friend or foe, from Hoh Tse-Lo they always received a pleasant smile and a courtly bow.

However, the spoken instructions in Chinese to the man mixing the drinks was another matter. To those people he liked went a man-sized portion. To those he didn't like, a dribble. How could anything check? It was all served according to the politeness or the rude-

ness of the guests. They usually got what they deserved, friend and foe alike.

Of course those who received generous portions thought the drinks wonderful, and bought again.

"In that way," said Hoh Tse-Lo in explaining, "I built up good will. My friends always came back for more."

"But the others?"

"Do they matter? They wouldn't have liked the drinks, anyway."

It's logical, in a way, I suppose.

As Hoh Tse-Lo expressed it, "People should learn that a man's best friend can be his bartender. He should therefore always be treated with great courtesy."

But the hotel management wanted things to check. They weren't interested in the philosophical manner of serving drinks. And they couldn't understand why one bottle of liquor supplied twenty or more cocktails, and another bottle of exactly the same size and content, ten or less.

So at the end of a week we packed up the scrolls and the tapestries, the tinkly bells, and the gay festive lanterns, and went home. We had done our best to introduce ancient Chinese liquors to the American public. And after this, if they wanted some "Tiger Passion" or "Autumn Glow" they'd have to come to Chinatown for it.

But here's the odd part of it all to me, and still most unexplainable. When the week's receipts were finally counted up, the sum total of drinks purchased from the number of bottles consumed was exactly what it

## DRINKS ON THE HOUSE

would have been had the orthodox method of so many drinks to each bottle been observed.

How Hoh Tse-Lo did it, I don't know to this day. It all checked perfectly in the end.

Occasionally Hoh Tse-Lo and I hold a post-mortem over our adventure with the Chinese bar. We admit it was fun while it lasted, and we regret it didn't last longer.

"I think," he once said sadly, "we'd still be serving Chinese cocktails if the hotel hadn't been so stubborn—and so exacting!"

## SAY IT IN VERSE

.....

NOT long after becoming acquainted with the Chinese I decided it might lead to a better understanding on my part if, in one swift hurdle, I could surmount the barrier of the babel of a foreign tongue and learn the language. I expressed this wish to Eddie Wu.

"If, like most Americans," he said, "you want to learn only the swear words, I advise against it. You will find many strange oaths in our language, incapable of proper translation, and that would only confuse your friends and your family."

"I shall be careful," I replied.

"Then there are two words you must never use. And those are *fie nee*."

"Meaning?"

" 'Hurry up.' Should you say those to a Chinese he'll not pay the slightest attention."

So that was my first lesson in Chinese, and while I've said "*fie nee*" viciously under my breath with the same emphasis one places on a good old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon cuss word, I've never said those words aloud.

What good would it do me? The Chinese refuse to be hurried.

And learning Chinese is not something to be accomplished in six easy lessons. Under even ordinary circumstances I am not a good linguist. But when I started to learn Chinese I was in another world of strange sounds, even stranger meanings, and with nothing at all to cling to.

I have been told that there are over forty thousand Chinese words. The average person can get by very well with two thousand. Five thousand at his command will place a man in the well-read class. Ten thousand is considered damned good, and knowing over ten thousand words makes a man a scholar, and therefore eligible to a position in the service of the government.

But that is only the beginning. You can say one word in seven different tonal inflections and with each inflection the meaning of the word changes. The result is that you really don't speak Chinese at all—you sing it!

One of the first things I learned to say in Chinese was the simple "*Ho la ma.*" That's their way of asking, on meeting a friend, "How are you?" You chant it in a monotone, and it is comparatively easy.

The answer is "*Gay ho la nay ho la ma,*" which means, "Very well, thank you, hope you are the same." Or if you'd rather simplify it you can merely say, "*Ho,*" meaning "Good."

But be careful how you sing that "*Ho.*"

Once one of my Chinese friends said to me, "*Ho la ma?*"

"*Ho!*" I answered quickly.

Everybody howled. I had given it the wrong inflec-

tion and in so doing had called myself a poetic but very dirty name—one that is not used in polite society.

However, saying "*Ho la ma*" is perfectly safe. And I've had lots of fun from time to time experimenting with Chinese who were strangers to me. I passed a laundryman on the street one day, his bundle of clothes over his shoulder, trudging patiently along, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

"*Ho la ma*," I said in an even undertone.

Without so much as giving me a side glance he continued on his way but replied in perfect English, "My feet hurt!"

So I studied Chinese and felt very proud of myself. My friends helped me, and were patient. I soon had a simple, working vocabulary, and displayed it on all occasions.

"Do you really speak Chinese?" my American friends would ask.

"Certainly," I would reply and roll off a few words. It was a wonderful parlor trick.

I even translated once for a self-appointed social leader in a small town the Chinese writing on the teapot her first husband had bought her in San Francisco years ago. I gave her that line from Walt Whitman, "I exist as I am, that is enough, if no other in the world be aware I sit content."

"How typically Chinese," she murmured. "How poetic—how beautifully philosophical—how true!" Happily for me, she didn't recognize the quotation.

Then one day I met my downfall.

It was at a tea given by the Drama League at the Hotel Pierre in New York City for the current celeb-

rities of the theatrical season. All the stars were there, a few playwrights even, and among the guests of honor was Dr. S. I. Hsiung, a scholar from Peking, whose play, *Lady Precious Stream*, was being done that winter on Broadway.

I had had, by this time, a few stories about the Chinese published in a magazine or two, and was therefore considered by my good friends an authority on China and things Chinese. Odd how those things happen, when you don't deserve it. An authority on the culture of a civilization five thousand years old, when the number of years I had known them could be counted on the fingers of one hand? In my secret soul I knew better. But give a man a tag of some sort and the tag sticks, and a reputation is made—or unmade.

Each guest of honor that day very nicely had someone to act as an official host. Did Dr. Hsiung speak English? Nobody knew for certain. Yet someone hinted timidly that if he had translated the old Chinese play into English he must know a word or two.

"But that doesn't prove anything," said one of the dowagers. "I can read French perfectly, yet nobody knows what I'm saying when I try to speak it. Anyway, the Chinese are peculiar."

Then it was remembered that I knew "all about the Chinese, and speaks Chinese, too, like a native." So I was delegated to act as official host to Dr. Hsiung.

He arrived at the tea in good time, smiling and bland, clad in Chinese dress. His wife, a diminutive creature whose loveliness made everyone gasp with pleasure, was with him. I was introduced to Dr. Hsiung by the reception committee.



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"He speaks Chinese!" meaning me.

Silence fell. All the dowagers in Christendom, it seemed to me, gathered about breathless. They were eager to see an exhibition of Chinese good manners. "For the Chinese are a polite race, you know."

It was up to me to put on an act. I bowed. Then I looked the learned and the scholarly Dr. Hsiung straight in the eye, and without a single pause, rattled off quickly and briefly all the Chinese I knew. It sounded like a speech.

This is what I said in Chinese, "*Ho sun ho la ma gay ho la nay ho la ma nay hui henn sher fon gway nay sick fon may ah sick jaw low may sick hai m'm hai yet yee som say um lok chut bot gow sup daw jaa m'm goy ho choy gung hee fat choy gum yut hoe yit ho see guy chow lung har.*"

Dr. Hsiung bowed gravely, gave me a gracious smile, and then rattled off his reply in Chinese. I bowed again. He bowed.

The dowagers relaxed and took a deep breath again. The day had been saved for the American theater and art.

What I had said to Dr. Hsiung was, "Good morning how are you I am very well thank you how are you where are you going I am going home have you eaten rice today I have eaten I have not eaten yes no one two three four five six seven eight nine ten thank you please good luck Happy New Year present day very warm here is to your good health lobster Canton style in their shell."

Had I known more I would have said it.

Later I was alone with Dr. Hsiung and his wife and

I asked him in English if he had understood what I had said.

He replied, in beautifully soft-spoken English, "No. Did you understand what I said?"

"No," I answered.

Then we both laughed.

That's one thing I like about the Chinese. They understand a joke and will never let you down.

But I have an alibi for his not understanding me and my failure to understand him. I spoke in a Cantonese dialect—with an Iowa accent—and he spoke the purest of Mandarin. They are quite different.

But even then I hadn't yet learned my lesson. I was still boastful. One night I was with some American friends in a Spanish bar in Greenwich Village. There were several people there from Argentina, and a group of assorted foreigners. One of my friends spoke Spanish, and a conversation started. Then someone asked me if I spoke any foreign language.

"Only Chinese," I replied, and felt very superior.

Whereupon one of the women, wearing a beautiful fur coat, began to rattle off some Chinese. I didn't understand a word she was saying.

"I'm afraid we don't speak the same dialect," I said.

"What dialect do you speak?"

"Cantonese."

"I was speaking Cantonesel!"

Whereupon the next round of drinks was on me.

But I have an alibi for that, too.

While written Chinese is the same throughout China, the spoken word varies tremendously. Practically every village has its own dialect. This is easy to understand

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

when one remembers that there was not much communication between villages even fifty miles apart, and as a result the spoken word, over a period of hundreds of years, took on different textures of sound. And even among the Chinese themselves I have heard varying pronunciations of the same word, and often discussions as to just how it should be said with the proper inflection.

It is only in recent years that Mandarin, the language of scholars and diplomats, has been recognized as the universal spoken language. It was the present Ambassador to this country from China, His Excellency Hu Shih, who was responsible for starting this movement. A common spoken language and roads that are making intercourse possible between villages and cities and removing the barrier of dialects are two of the factors that today are uniting all China into one strong nation. So if anyone wishes to keep up with the times and is contemplating a trip to the Flowery Kingdom, be prepared by knowing Mandarin. Even the Chinese themselves in this country are attending classes in Mandarin, and one of these days the babel of dialects may be over.

But I do know that Chinese is essentially a poetic language. Say it in verse, and let your fancy run riot—that's what the Chinese do with their spoken tongue.

To us, automobile is just another word, and not a particularly lovely one at that. It is derived from other languages. But the Chinese language has no Latin, French, or German ancestry to fall back upon. So when automobiles were introduced into China not so long ago, what to call them?

The answer to the riddle was easy. Say it in verse.

So when a Chinese merchant summoned his car in the morning to drive him to his place of business he asked for *gee yoo cheh*. To render this back literally into English it means, "The cart that runs itself."

A match, *for-chi*, becomes poetically "fire stick." And a telephone is best described as "magic words over the air." When you hear *low shan gay hay* spoken, which is "a store voice machine," you know a victrola is meant.

This land of ours, America, became to the Chinese *Gum San*, or "The Golden Mountain." (There was gold in the hills of California in the old days.) And a flaxen-haired Anglo-Saxon became *fon qua low*, or "foreign blue-eyed devil man."

And so it goes. It becomes a pleasant afternoon's diversion for the Chinese to think of objects, desires, people, and events of the day in terms of poetry. Often with some of my Chinese friends I sit quiet and play a little game. We try to rephrase into poetic terms the life that is moving so swiftly about us.

At one time I lived in a street where urchins played in the gutters and yelled and shouted at the tops of their lungs. To the Chinese I lived on "The Street of Noisy Children."

Times Square with its flitting seething crowds has been called by the Chinese "The Street of Restless Feet." And Chatham Square where the elevated trains rumble all day and night has been dubbed "The Corner of the Thundering Iron."

If you plan a trip uptown from Chinatown you might say in Chinese, "Let us go to the Corner of the Thun-

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

dering Iron and ride uptown to the Street of the Restless Feet."

You can even poetically describe your friends in verse if you so like. Once in a moment of anger I called a person who had annoyed me, by an insulting descriptive phrase.

The Chinese friend who heard me was shocked. "Why be so blunt?" he said.

"How would you say it?" I replied. "He is the son of a so-and-so."

"Better be friendly and poetic about it," cautioned my friend. "In Chinese we would say, 'The lonely son of an unmarried mother.' It means the same thing."

So the next time I was tempted to vent my wrath, I hesitated a moment and tried to think of a poetic phrase. It soothed my violence, and gave me a bit of amusement, too. You can't be angry at people and things for long if you think before speaking and then describe them poetically. With me it has proved one of the best antidotes I know for an unruly temper.

Then one evening some of us went to the symphony concert at the Lewisohn Stadium. One of my American friends who was along had acquired the bad habit of punctuating almost every sentence with a good, plain Anglo-Saxon word of four letters.

A Chinese friend of mine, a recent graduate of Lingnan University in Canton, frowned ever so slightly. I saw that he was offended by the vulgar and unnecessary use of simple words. I hinted as much to the American.

He asked belligerently of the Chinese, "Don't you ever do those things in Chinese?"

"Oh, yes," was the calm reply.

"Then how do you say them?"

"Poetically," answered my Chinese friend serenely.

And that gave us a thought. On our way home that summer night riding on the top of a Riverside Drive bus, we tried to think of appropriate and subtle implications in poetic phrases to express the blunt and precise Anglo-Saxon words of four letters that are often spoken but so seldom find their way into print.

Expressing the thought poetically, you can also, if you so wish, avoid being direct and outspoken about an embarrassing question. I remember when General Tsai Ting-Kai was in this country. I was present at an interview he granted the press. The General didn't speak English and so had with him an interpreter to rephrase into Chinese the tactless questions hurled at him.

"Do you think the present invaders of China will be defeated?" asked one reporter.

The interpreter turned to General Tsai and repeated the question. The General thought a moment and then made his reply.

Smiling, the interpreter turned to the reporter and said, "The General is of the opinion that swallows always return home at dusk."

All other questions were answered the same way. The newspaper reporters didn't get much material for an interview. But it seems to me a most efficient way of handling a too inquisitive press.

There's a game the Chinese play that's a lot of fun. Someone makes a general statement of some sort, usually in four words, although more may be used. But the reply must contain exactly the same number of words,

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

and must continue and enlarge upon the thought expressed, and be an appropriate answer.

"Reflections on water eternal," someone may say.

"Stone cast reflections distorted," might be a good reply.

And so on. The game requires wit and ingenuity, and if one is clever enough to make the reply rhyme as in a poem, so much the better.

Even Chinese writing is poetry in motion. It is a pictorial writing. The symbol for man, for example 人 looks like a man. There is even humor in Chinese letters. Enclose a man safely on all four sides 囚 and what does he become? It's really very simple—the symbol means "a prisoner." Place 口 (which means "mouth") above the symbol for man, and it's something else again. 兄 In this case you must use some imagination, and a touch of philosophy. The symbol means "elder brother." Which, as the Chinese reason philosophically, the elder speaks for the younger man; therefore he becomes his elder brother.

One of my choicest treasures is what the Chinese call a "*Ho-Wah*." On silk and linen paper some of our friends presented my wife and me with a verse of poetry. To the right our names, in the center the poetic thought concerning us, and to the left the names of the donors. Four letters only in the verse, but the four so carefully selected that they can be read either from right to left or left to right and still retain the same meaning. It took three weeks of careful study to find those exact

four letters. It hangs in an honored place in our living room, and is like a painting. Just some Chinese writing, beautifully done, but one doesn't get tired of looking at it.

To carry on a conversation in poetry is the Chinese way of enjoying the poetry of living. Thoughts are poems. Words are living poems. And life itself is a poem with pulsating rhythms and mighty cadences, and now and then a bit of doggerel thrown in for good measure to maintain a perfect balance. We have only to begin by expressing poetically the common, everyday occurrences to remove some of the sting and bitterness from reality and come into a more complete enjoyment of living. At least, that's the Chinese way of viewing it.



## TURN THE OTHER EAR

.....

SOMETHING was troubling eleven-year-old Kwong-Hon. I saw that plainly by his behavior at the gym class one Saturday afternoon. Christmas was not far off, and the Sunday School classes at the Church of All Nations were to give a play and have a Christmas tree. The play was to tell the story of the Nativity, and Kwong-Hon had been asked to take the role of one of the Wise Men.

"I have a very serious question to ask you," he said that Saturday afternoon. "But I can't ask it now. Come to Sunday School with me tomorrow—and then you can wisely tell me what to do."

So to the Chinese Sunday School I went that afternoon. All my little friends were there, as well as their sisters. They sang the hymns, listened to the lesson of the day, recited the Golden Text, and dropped their nickels and dimes into the collection plate.

On the way home to Chinatown Kwong-Hon asked me soberly and seriously, "Jesus was a very good man, wasn't He?"

"Very good," I replied.

"Did He ever get thirsty?" he asked.

"Certainly. He was a human being, just as you and I."

"Well, then, suppose His Father had given Him a nickel to put in the collection plate, but suppose Jesus was very thirsty and wanted a soda pop, what would He have done?"

"What would Confucius have done?" I parried.

Without a moment's hesitation Kwong-Hon answered, "He would have obeyed His Father!"

"That's right," I answered.

"Jesus was like Confucius, wasn't He?"

"What do you think?"

"I think He was. They were both very good men. I think they were both much gooder than me. I think they got thirsty, too, but they knew exactly what to do."

"And what do you think that was?" I asked.

"I think," he said, smiling and at last finding a solution to the problem that was troubling him, "I think that they both would have gone without the soda pop—and the next time they went to Sunday School would have surprised the teacher by putting ten cents into the collection. I think that's what they would have done. Don't you?"

"Probably," I answered.

"Now tell me," he said, "if I am to be a Wise Man in the play, what should I wear? I don't think my gym clothes would be proper. I don't think my school suit would be right either. My teacher wants me to wear a colored nightgown with a sash about my middle, but I don't think a nightgown in public is modest. What do you think I should wear?"

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

Since I wasn't directing the play and didn't want to interfere, I evaded his question by saying, "If you were going to pay a visit to a great man like the baby Jesus, what would you wear?"

"I'd wear—" he started to say. "Yes. I know what I'd wear. Thank you for advising me."

The night of the Christmas play came. There was a tree, too, which the Chinese had decorated. A Christmas tree with lights and tinsel, and colored paper hung from its green branches—red, good luck paper. And at the top of the tree was a Chinese dragon, a bright silver star dangling from each of its claws.

At the base of the tree were piled the presents, something for everyone, young and old. And somewhere someone had placed a bowl of joss sticks, so the air was fragrant with the odor of sandalwood.

All the fathers and mothers were there, smiling and happy. Ah-Pau, in a Chinese gown, wearing her jade and the seven gold pins in her hair, sat surrounded as usual by babies.

The program started with a group of young men who sang "Holy Night" in English. They had been studying the language at night classes during the past year, and this was the equivalent of their graduation exercises. As they sat down they were greeted with a burst of applause. That called for an encore, so after a hasty consultation among themselves they sang another song, the one Kate Smith made so popular, "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain."

Then the little tots of six and seven responded by singing "Holy Night" in Chinese. One little boy sang

## TURN THE OTHER EAR

so fast he finished before the others. But he waited patiently and then joined in on the "Amen" with gusto. Everybody laughed and applauded. But their encore consisted of each receiving a lollipop, and the little fellow who finished first received two, because as someone said, "He won the race, didn't he?"

When the curtains parted on the play the scene disclosed represented both heaven and earth. In the foreground was the manger. In the background a few feet from the floor hung a gray curtain, and fastened at various intervals to this were bright red tapestries embroidered with gold and silver dragons and Chinese symbols. Behind this was heaven, for perched on chairs and boxes were two rows of little Chinese girls dressed as angels. Up and down they waved their arms, never once smiling, never once an expression of any sort crossing their faces. They paid no attention to the play at all, but kept on waving their arms all through the performance. When one would become tired, she would rest for a moment—and then, obviously nudged by the girl next to her, would start waving rapidly to make up for lost time.

It was a dramatic moment when the Christmas star appeared in the heavens, dangling from a long pole. It was also the signal for the angels to burst into song with "Star of Bethlehem."

But the climax of the play was the appearance of the Wise Men on their way to the manger. Kwong-Hon led the solemn procession, clad in Chinese dress, carrying in one hand a statue of the Goddess of Mercy, and in the other a handful of burning joss sticks.

And I wondered if that wasn't the way it had hap-

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

pened centuries ago—and if one of the Wise Men who came to pay homage to the infant Jesus might not have been from the Flowery Kingdom.

The question is often asked me by people curious about the soul of their Chinese laundryman, "But are



the Chinese ever really converted to Christianity?"

The answer that I can make to that is rather simple: "Yes—in their own Chinese way."

And that reminds me of my meeting with a young Chinese student recently arrived in this country from China. Over there he had attended mission schools and had studied English. I was doing some teaching at the time, and shortly after I met him he had some questions to ask me.

"What is your sermon to be this Sunday?" he inquired politely.

"I have no sermon," I said.

"But I thought all American teachers delivered sermons on Sunday!" he said, puzzled, remembering no doubt the mission schools. "But you are going to church on Sunday, I hope?"

"I don't think so," I answered.

"But I thought all American teachers got paid to go to church on Sunday."

"Not in America," I said.

He paused for a moment, and then asked, "When are you going to start to convert me?"

He seemed so sad about it that I couldn't refrain from smiling as I said, "I don't think I shall make the attempt."

"Why not?" he then asked. "Don't you think I'm a heathen and need it?"

"Has anyone ever tried to convert you?"

"Every American I have ever met—especially the old ladies," he answered.

"Have they ever succeeded?"

"No. I don't mind being converted to Christianity, but I don't understand being converted to a church. I haven't been very polite, I'm afraid. I have a friend who was converted six times and joined six different churches. But then he never could resist an invitation of any sort. So far I've not joined a church. I don't think it's honest or polite to join one church and neglect attendance upon all the others. I visit every different church I can find and like them all. Then I go home and read my Chinese translation of the Bible and

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

find great thoughts and noble sentiments, and then I go for a walk and try to practice what I have read. And then I have realized on more than one occasion that I was also trying to practice the moral behavior of the superior man as expressed by Confucius. And do you know what I think?—that I am a Christian. And that Christianity and Confucianism are alike. And if you are one you can't help being the other."

Of course what he had discovered for himself is obviously true. For the sayings and teachings of these two great Masters are in many ways parallel. They both taught love of one's neighbor, virtue, and humility.

If a Chinese obeys the Confucian Golden Rule, which is, "What you do not wish others should do unto you, do not do unto them," he is being what we term a Christian. We know the Christian precept of "Honor thy father and thy mother," and we know how the Chinese have put this into practice.

What puzzled my young friend was, despite the fact that he found the teachings of Christianity and Confucianism to be practically the same, he had been told nevertheless that in order to be a Christian he must first be converted and then join a church.

For Confucianism isn't exactly a religion. It's a practical, everyday, commonsense philosophy; a system of morality, a code of ethics, a perfect guide to moral and social behavior, rather than a religion. There is nothing in Confucianism of the supernatural. There are no Confucian temples. No places of worship for this great sage. There is no deification of Confucius as a prophet, nor as a Savior of man. He was a sane philosopher who stated certain rules of conduct; a man who lived, mar-

## TURN THE OTHER EAR

ried, had children, enjoyed good food, listened to music, wrote poetry—and thought always that life was well worth living.

The Chinese accept him for what he was: somebody to quote in everyday life as they go about their affairs; a handy reference for difficulties that may arise in a complex world of relatives, friends, and politicians.

"As Confucius says," is heard today in all Chinese homes, and as "Confucius says," so they do. Perhaps of all people the Chinese, in their daily lives, more nearly follow the teachings of their Master than any other people.

And since they have found his precepts practical and workable in worldly affairs, they treat Confucius with great respect.

A few years ago this country went through a period of obscene barroom jokes beginning with "Confucius say." They were started, I have been told, by a too-clever New York columnist. But I wonder what this country would have done had our people discovered in the Chinese press similar wisecracks attributed to our great teacher, Jesus? There would have been a storm of protest, I am certain, and many harsh comments would have been made on the Chinese lack of good taste, their indecent flippancy, and their crude manners.

But the Chinese I knew did not express any great indignation. They viewed those "Confucius say" jokes with an amused tolerance. It was the most sublime example of Christian forgiveness I've ever seen.

And even as Eddie Wu remarked, "Perhaps it will do some good, and as in the language of the Chamber of Commerce, 'make America Confucius conscious.' Cer-



tainly there were once a lot of jokes about Ford cars, and people bought a lot more Fords. Maybe it will be the same with the teachings of Confucius. Maybe people will want to know what he really says. Maybe when they find out he said some good things, and as he said so we do, it will lead to a better understanding."

The young Chinese student of whom I have spoken was also puzzled over the indifference he observed among some Americans toward the teachings of Jesus and their attitude toward Him. He attended a revival meeting and came away very confused.

He once made a comment for which I have no answer. He was a severe classicist when it came to learning English. He wished to know only the "good" words, and lamented the fact that we have in our language what is called "slang," which he defined as taking a good word and giving it a vulgar, or bad use. He carried with him a little notebook and every time he heard a new word he would write it down and then try to use it in a sentence.

One day someone said to him, "Hello, kid." He immediately looked up "kid" in the dictionary. "I was very embarrassed," he said. "I found the word meant 'young goat, or leather made from its skin.' And I wondered what I had done, or in what way my manners had been bad that I should be called 'a young goat.' But then I discovered it was slang and meant also 'young boy.' But I shall not ever use it in that way. I wonder what my professor might say if I should address him as, 'Hello, you old kid.' He might think I really meant to imply he was a goat, or tough leather from its skin."

He bought tickets for a play—one of our modern,

sparkling, racy comedies—and then asked me if it was a poetic drama he was seeing, and would the language of the play be classic English?

“Hardly in this play,” I said. “You’ll find it extremely colloquial.”

“What is the meaning of that big word, ‘colloquial’?” he asked, taking out his notebook.

I endeavored to explain that it meant common, everyday speech as used by the man in the street, and not the fine, literary language of scholars and poets.

“I know,” he said, “slang—giving good words a bad meaning—like when the Americans get mad and say, ‘Oh, Jesus Christ!’”

I had no answer to make.

Just as the Chinese, particularly in this country, have accepted without much quibbling the teachings of Christianity, so have they accepted in China in the past all other religions that have come their way.

From India came Buddhism with its strange and colorful gods. The Chinese accepted Buddhism, for like Confucianism they found it too teaches morality, patience, mercy, fortitude, chastity, and kindness.

They even, with typical Chinese good humor, adapted one of these gods to their own use—the Laughing Buddha. This squat, rotund little figure may be seen in the curio stores. A funny god of red lacquer, he beams upon the world happily in a state of perfect content. Calm and reposeful, he views the world with an ageless smile—the Chinese interpretation of the Buddhist Nirvana.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

But the Chinese found that even with a system of ethics in Confucianism, and borrowed gods from Buddhism, life was not complete. Man, to be completely happy, must have his pet superstitions. In Taoism, the Chinese discovered an appeal to the side of their natures which for perfect fulfillment demands something of the occult and the supernatural.

The founder of Taoism was Lao-Tse, a contemporary of Confucius, and it is said the two did not always agree. Particularly did the practical Confucius raise a quizzical eyebrow when Lao-Tse said, "To withdraw into obscurity is the way of Heaven."

And so to this collection of philosophies and religions the Chinese have now added a fourth—Christianity.

"But why not?" said Eddie Wu. "All life is here to be enjoyed. Why throw away one good cloak only to take on another? Why not wear all cloaks, even though they be of varied shapes and colors? It's the same with great truths. Turn the other ear, I believe is a good thing to do. Listen to all the sayings of all the great Teachers—and practice them all. It makes for an abundant life."

I was reminded of the time I was in the Southwestern part of this country and was visiting the campus of one of our church colleges down there. It was a very orthodox school. And I was surprised to learn that one of the teachers, who had been previously a missionary to China, was giving a course in Confucianism and Buddhism.

I asked one of the students just what was the purpose and the viewpoint of the instructor.

"To prove they are all wrong!" he replied.

This was a unique approach.

"Is he proving his point?" I asked.

"I'm not so sure," replied the student. "Sometimes I think those heathen philosophers have got something!"

I told Eddie Wu this story, and he replied, "All grains of rice in a bowl are all different, yet it is all rice."

Knowing that my Chinese friends accept every religion and every philosophy that comes their way gave me a better understanding of them. And much that seemed on the surface puzzling in their approach to the problems of living and contradictory in their actions, suddenly became clear.

Freedom of worship is every man's privilege. And the Chinese, by accepting all religions, have become intellectually the most tolerant of people. Perhaps they are one step ahead of us. Perhaps the ultimate religion of the world will be a synthesis of all religions. Certainly we should not censor anyone who sincerely adopts all great truths and tries to blend them into one.

So my Chinese friends may go to church on Sunday morning and sing hymns as loudly as anybody else. They believe and agree with what they have heard, too. Then they go home and read Confucius and do honor to their father and their mother. If they have done something during the week which they feel has not been right, they go to the temple, and there, quite alone, burn some joss to Kuanyin, the Goddess of Mercy, and ask for forgiveness. Coming out of the temple they rub three times the foot of the Laughing Buddha and wish for good luck and happiness. Then for an hour or two they retire into solitude and contemplate the unseen

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

world about them. That evening, having done obeisance to all the great Teachers, they go and have a merry banquet with their friends.

That's what Eddie Wu meant when he spoke of the abundant life.

## THE DRAGON DANCES

.....

IT WAS a cold night in February, the eve of *Sun Nin Toy*, the Chinese New Year, and at midnight, so we were told, perhaps the Dragon would come out of his lair and dance in the street. Maybe he would. Maybe he wouldn't. He was a temperamental Dragon, and sometimes overslept. And what he would do was a secret known only to himself.

But first we were to have a banquet at Eddie Wu's apartment in Chinatown, high above the streets. By the door hung a gaily colored lantern. All the other doors in the building had them, too. It was to let us know that the New Year was being celebrated. Everybody remains at home on New Year's Eve. It is the custom. To wave farewell to the Old and greet the New, is something to be celebrated in the bosom of one's own family.

In the warm, friendly atmosphere of Eddie's home we sat down to the banquet. And what a banquet! We indulged ourselves with Chinese food and Chinese talk of food. We played the game of verse, and tried to think of apt and poetic phrases for what might otherwise be a dull way of saying things. We nibbled away but glanced,

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

now and then, at the clock. No one spoke of the Dragon.

Should he appear it would be a great surprise. He was fast asleep, had been asleep since this time last year. But where he slept, his hiding place, was a secret. In fact the very existence of the Dragon was a secret. You didn't even speak of him on this New Year's Eve, because you didn't know he even existed.

The streets were deserted. Only now and then a straggler appeared on his way to a banquet. But lights shone in every window. And all families were reunited this evening.

We were sipping our third different soup when suddenly breaking the silence came the sound of firecrackers. Not one single firecracker, but the explosive rattle and thunder of a whole bunch thrown into the air.

Eddie Wu looked surprised.

"What can that be?" he asked.

His two younger brothers solemnly laid aside their chopsticks and waited. More firecrackers. Even Mr. Wu looked up expectantly.

"This is amazing!" he murmured. "What is going on at this hour of the night?"

Eddie rushed to the window and threw it open. From down the street came the sudden burst of the exploding firecrackers. Red flares, too, were being lighted. Windows about us were being thrown open, and people were gazing out.

"What's going on?" a neighbor across the way cried to Eddie.

"I don't know!" he answered.

"Something is taking place surely," said Mr. Wu.

"What can it be?" asked Eddie.

## THE DRAGON DANCES

Then his ten-year-old brother, Hon-Li, his eyes sparkling, said sensibly, "Let's go see!"

"That's an ideal!" exclaimed Eddie. "Let's."

In great excitement we put on our hats and coats.

"Wrap up warmly," urged Mr. Wu.

Then we rushed down the stairs. The rattle and sputter of firecrackers increased. Down the street we saw little spits of flame in the air as the crackers thrown high exploded. Red flares added to the excitement and made a rosy glow against the low-hanging clouds. People were flocking out of their homes. It was exactly on the stroke of midnight.

"What is it?" I asked, as we rushed breathlessly along.

"I don't know yet for certain," yelled back Eddie.

But little Hon-Li, whom I had taken by the hand and was yanking along unmercifully in our stride—he was taking two steps to my one—said, "I think it's the Dragon!"

I knew then that when Hon-Li grew older he would be a realist.

"Yes, it is the Dragon!" cried Eddie with great surprise as we came nearer. "He's coming out!"

"And he's going to dance, too, I bet," cried Hon-Li joyfully.

And sure enough—to our great surprise and delight—it was the Dragon. All year long he had slept peacefully on the ceiling of the temple, and now at the stroke of twelve, the moment that the New Year was born, he had come down from his hiding place. The firecrackers had aroused him from his long slumber. And to show his gratitude for the welcome accorded him, he was going to dance in the streets. He was a playful Dragon,



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

and he liked going through his paces. The Chinese beamed with joy. And a fusillade of firecrackers greeted him as he stepped out onto the street.

Drums began to roll and thunder, and cymbals crashed. And again the Dragon came down to earth and merrily danced with men on the streets of Chinatown.

It is like no Dragon you have ever seen. Some people even say it isn't the Dragon at all, but the Lion. And others get quite angry if you call it a Lion, and act as if they have been personally insulted. But even at that it didn't look like a Dragon much, or a Lion, either.

But let's not quibble. It is a gay and colorful beast, joyful in its ferocity, with ears that flap now and then, and a great, yawning mouth that stretches from ear to ear, red eyes that twinkle, and a long tail covered with tinsel and sparkling jewels. It is a happy, playful, imaginative Dragon, all gold, and red, and green, and yellow, with all the bright colors of the rainbow.

Ahead of the Dragon stepped one of the dancers. Clad in an ancient Chinese costume, a sash about his waist, and his silk trousers tucked into decorated boots, he waved a knotted piece of red silk. All this in rhythm to the thunder of the drums and the crashing of the cymbals. On each side of the Dragon walked his protectors, armed with tall, old battle-axes, ancient symbols of protection. The youth waving the red silk scarf tempted the Dragon on. Two dancers managed the Dragon; one concealed in his head, the other in his long tail. And other dancers waited in the crowd, should those supporting the Dragon tire. Never once must he stop his fanciful dance.

Bowing low, then rising on his hind legs and shaking

## THE DRAGON DANCES

his head with charming ferociousness, he pranced up the long street. Firecrackers exploded around the feet of the dancers, but the Dragon dancers took no notice. Never once did the Dragon draw back, nor show the least fright. On he danced to the headquarters of the tong. The ti-tum, ti-tum, ti-tum-tum-tum of the drums never once stopped, and the cymbals made an answering crash.

Officials of the tong appeared on the brightly lighted balcony, and applause and happy smiles greeted the Dragon as he shook his fierce mane, bowed low, rose on his hind legs, bowed low again, and yet again—and made it clear that he was thoroughly enjoying himself.

He didn't remain too long this eve of the New Year, for the next day he was to dance all day in the streets. On New Year's Day the Dragon is out for a purpose. Dangling on long red strings from the balconies and the flag poles of the stores and various association headquarters are heads of lettuce and an orange. Tied to these strings, not far away from the tempting food, are bits of folded red paper. Concealed in this red paper is money.

Stopping before each place the Dragon sees the lettuce. He is hungry. He is tempted to eat. But he is a polite Dragon. And he takes his time. He gambols about a bit. He approaches the food. He draws back. He sinks low to the ground, and then lifts himself up high. He is a wise Dragon, too, I believe, for he knows without being told something of the amount of the money enclosed in the red paper. If he doesn't know for certain, at least he suspects. At some spots he lingers longer than at others. Perhaps in former years he fared well at

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

those places. So he writhes about a bit, does his fantastic dance, and then, the drums and the cymbals reaching their climax of thundering noise, the Dragon with ever-increasing fervor shakes himself all over, and then rising high in the air gobbles the lettuce.

It was only the food the Dragon really wanted. And that was all he got. For by his side, a trusted Chinese, with a box under his arm, tears from the string the folded red paper containing the money, and thrusts it hurriedly into the box. And the Dragon moves on to the next bit of tempting food.

Not once during the long day does he stop. When the dancers become tired, others step into their places. It is one continuous performance until every orange and every bit of lettuce has been consumed, and the hungry Dragon has been fed for another year. Then back again he goes to his slumbers, until that day when firecrackers awaken him and rumors reach his ear that food is hung on red strings in the street.

The money collected in this manner is turned over to the Chinese Benevolent Association. It is the Chinese community chest. All civic improvements, all benefits from which Chinatown may derive profit and pleasure, are the result of this method of raising money. In this manner the Chinese schools have been built. Recently, the money has been turned over to the various Relief for China Associations. And no one knows, save the Dragon himself, just how much each contributor placed in that little red paper.

Sometimes, in clear weather, sword dancers will entertain the watchers in the street. With red sashes around their waists, bareheaded, and holding swords

## THE DRAGON DANCES

with wicked sharp edges—huge, heavy swords, the sort used in the old days for executions—they face each other. And the dance commences. With a savage swish through the air the sword descends. The spectators hold their breaths. But the opponent ducks just in time. Otherwise his bleeding head would have fallen to the pavement. Back again he swings his sword. Again a dodge just in time. You close your eyes and hope for the best. Firecrackers are thrown into the air, and bang and bounce about the feet of the dancers. And the Chinese smile with pleasure.

On this New Year's Day everybody goes visiting. The children call upon their elders and wish them "*Guong yea fat choy*," or "Luck and prosperity on New Year." On the table is a gaily colored box of *chow-chow*, assorted Chinese candies, dried fruits and delicious tidbits. Also a pile of oranges, and other special foods for this day. You are supposed to help yourself. Nobody visiting in your home on Chinese New Year's must go away hungry. Perhaps your host will offer you a glass of rice wine.

"*Ho sai gui*," you say.

"*Ho sai gui*," is smiled back.

This is the Chinese, "Here's looking at you," or "Your good health, sir!" Literally translated it means, "I hope you'll find the world good to you."

The elders, when the children come to see them, give the youngsters lucky money, which they call *hung bow*, wrapped in red paper. This money is supposed to be spent—and spend it the children do. Sometimes there's too much sweets and soda pop, and then mamma has to get out the Chinese equivalent of milk of magnesia.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

But it's all right. New Year's comes once a year as it has now in the Chinese calendar for over four thousand six hundred years, the Dragon is dancing, and everybody is happy.

All enmities are forgotten on this day. Enemies will smile at enemies, and friends will congratulate friends. And a visitor to Chinatown will go home with his pockets stuffed with cigars. There are banquets galore. Everybody feasts on this day. This is the day, too, on which Chinese always pay all their debts. They may borrow from Peter to pay Paul, but the debts are paid.

I was with Eddie Wu one New Year's Day when a cousin from uptown met him on the street, and gave him the \$20 he owed him.

"This," said Eddie, "goes into a separate pocket and will not be spent."

"Is that the custom?" I asked.

"No, it's the habit. Tomorrow he'll come and borrow this twenty back again. But today he is happily free from debt!"

On New Year's Day I went to call on Mr. Wu, and we got into a discussion of the meaning of the Dragon.

The Chinese, so Mr. Wu told me, do not regard the Dragon as a frightful and terrible animal. To them he has a good rather than an evil influence. In China, he is the most honored of all animals, being the symbol of the Taoists. What the Cross is to Christianity the Dragon is to the religion of the Taoists. But it is the symbol of joy and happiness, of all that is good in nature and life, and not of sorrow.

It is what the Taoists call "The Yi Principle"—that

## THE DRAGON DANCES

playful spirit of man, the creator; the fanciful imaginative quality that urges one to paint a picture or write a poem merely for the fun of doing it; the desire of the recluse to get away from the perplexing problems of a too realistic world and into the realm of the spirit—that world of his own creating into which a man retires to rediscover again his own soul and find repose; and that ultimate acceptance of his identity with all nature.

For the Dragon is like nature, and nature is like the Dragon. The rolling hills resemble the back of the Dragon. The waves of the ocean come tumbling to the shores like a hungry, devouring Dragon. The rivers twist and turn as does the Dragon. Even mother earth roars and rumbles when there's an earthquake. And volcanoes spit forth fire and smoke from their Dragon nostrils.

But he is man's servant, not his master—and if you treat the Dragon kindly he will be your friend. So the Chinese dance with the Dragon, twist his tail in good-natured fun, and make of him a playful, kindly beast.

"If," as Mr. Wu said, "the Dragon is Nature in all her terror and majesty, let us not be afraid. Let us go out and meet that fear. It is only the unknown that frightens us. We cling to our hearthstones, because we are afraid of what lies beyond that hill over there. But once we go out and explore that unknown country, our fear of it vanishes. Shake hands with the Dragon—that's the way of Tao—the way of peace."

He applied this philosophy of the playful Dragon to one of the problems of daily living by telling a story on himself. When he was a young man he had an enemy of whom he was afraid. The thoughts of what this enemy might do made his nights restless and his days filled with

grim foreboding. He had, as he expressed it, "The Dragon Fear," that stood in the way of his complete enjoyment of living. And the more he fought this fear the greater it became.

And then he arrived at the conclusion that this enemy was only human, and might be just as afraid of him. One day he met him on the street. For a moment they stood glaring at each other. Then Mr. Wu smiled. And instead of heaping insults on his enemy, which might have led to a fight, he began to compliment him.

"I stopped and chatted with him with all the bending-over-backward politeness I could summon," said Mr. Wu. "I told him what a great and good man he was. I lied profusely, and said many things I didn't mean. It was so unexpected he was completely befuddled. But he also was polite about it. And he began to compliment me. The unpleasant thoughts we had harbored in our hearts against each other slipped like water through our fingers. It wasn't long after that he became my friend, and even went out of his way to do me a kindness. That's what I mean by shaking hands with the Dragon."

The casual observer watching the Dragon dance in the streets may come to the conclusion that the Chinese are at it again—being superstitious in a big way. But in reality they are only having a corking good time, and making an outward gesture of a philosophy that if put into practice will prove a beneficial balm to the headaches and heartaches of a frightening and terrifying world.

## YEAR OF THE MONKEY

.....

WHEN the Chinese came to this country they brought with them not only their chopsticks and their sayings of Confucius and other philosophers, but also a practical application of these philosophies. They have, as we have seen, their own peculiar ways of doing things, and have remained aloof in the midst of our American life.

Yet they soon learned to adapt themselves successfully to Western civilization by combining an Eastern and a Western philosophy of life. And they have evolved out of this meeting of the East and the West a way of living that contains the answers to many of the social problems that are puzzling us today. We know how they have found an answer among others to the problem of juvenile delinquency, of divorce, and the proper use of one's leisure time. But what about social security? What about cooperative endeavor in business? And what meaning, if any, does democracy have for them?

To explain how they solve the question of social security in their own Chinese way, I have only to tell the story of Charlie Sing. Sing Yo-Choy is his Chinese name, and translated means "Courage brings luck."



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

I first met him during the Year of the Monkey—or 1932, to be exact. Those were distressing years, the early 1930's, as we all remember. The savings of a lifetime vanished like so many stray puffs of wind. Stocks and bonds became only colored bits of paper. All some people had left was a none-too-consoling memory of a brighter and more prosperous day. How despairing, how lost we all were, and how hopeless even the future seemed. We hardly knew which way to turn. But not Charlie Sing.

He had lost his laundry, had less than a dollar in his pocket, no job, and no resources of his own. Yet Charlie wasn't troubled. The economic stability of the country had gone completely cockeyed, and Uncle Sam under a beautiful sparkling dome in Washington was trying to think of some way out. But not Charlie. He didn't have to. He was prepared for just such an emergency.

In the years previous to this he had had a flourishing laundry over in New Jersey. He worked hard, sassed his customers in soft-spoken Chinese, flattered them in pidgin English, and his laundry prospered.

Then came the Year of the Monkey. He's a bad hombre that Monkey, and he makes his appearance every twelve years. And when he arrives he always brings disaster with him. There's nothing to do—if you are Chinese—but accept the situation with as much good humor as possible, which doesn't necessarily mean with a smile.

Time is reckoned in old China in cycles of sixty-year periods. These cycles are to the Chinese the same as our hundred-year periods. According to the Chinese

## YEAR OF THE MONKEY

calendar, which is over four thousand years old, it is now the seventy-seventh cycle.

All this was thought out by the wise men of antiquity by consulting the stars. They observed that the planet Jupiter makes a circuit of the earth every twelve years, and Saturn every thirty years. This makes them come in conjunction in the heavens every twenty years, but once in every sixty years they meet in almost the same place in the sky as seen from the earth. So the wise men of antiquity, without the aid of telescopes, determined this sixty-year period from the stars.

To each year of the cycle they gave a name. These are the twelve terrestrial branches, which correspond to the Western signs of the Zodiac. They are, in the order in which they occur: the Year of the Rat, the Year of the Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Ram, Monkey, Cock, Dog, and Boar. There's even more to the name: The twelve branches are combined with two each of the ten celestial stems, which are wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. So it was really the Year of the Water-Monkey. Water runs through one's fingers, and the monkey is a badly behaving animal. There is no luck to be found in the Year of the Water-Monkey. But one doesn't have to believe this. It's just the Chinese way of looking at things.

Yet we have but to compare our calendar with the Chinese calendar to find that the Year of the Water-Monkey has occurred also in 1812 and 1872. We'll have to consult our histories to see that those years were not happy ones. And 1941, as it happens, is the Year of the Metal-Snake. Guns and treachery? Maybe those wise Chinese of antiquity weren't so dumb after all.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

It's all there, hidden away in "The Seal of Life" or the "Principle of the Yang and Yin" of the mythological first Emperor of China, Fuh-Hi.

Yet no matter what reasons the academic economists may give, no matter what explanations the politicians may offer, usually blaming the other fellow, Charlie Sing knew as his ancestors have known for many centuries that the Year of the Monkey comes every so often in the cycle of the years. Then business takes a downward sweep, banks tremble and collapse, and little bits of colored engraved paper denoting shares and savings invested become just so many bits of paper and nothing more. When that happens, there's nothing to be done but take the Year of the Monkey in one's stride—and be prepared.

The next Year of the Monkey comes in 1944, but it's the Year of the Wood-Monkey, not the Water-Monkey. Maybe things won't be so bad.

But as 1932 came rolling around Charlie's customer began to darn their own socks and wash their own shirts—if they had a shirt to wash. And there weren't enough bundles in his laundry to pay the rent.

Many of his customers were having hard luck, too. Empty stores became common sights along the main street, as did idle men hanging about the street corners, and people going hungry. Charlie saw his friend turning to the relief agencies. He knew the desperate cries for aid, the appeals for help, the suffering and the misery. He even knew assistance would be given him were he to apply. One of his customers had told him a much when he delivered the last neatly tied bundle of washing.

## YEAR OF THE MONKEY

"Close laundry," said Charlie. "No money for rent."

"Broke, Charlie?"

"Bent—broke—bust," answered Charlie philosophically.

"Were you born in this country?"

"Okay born in Chicago. Father okay born in San Francisco. Grandfather okay born in Canton. He come this country early build railroad. Always I vote straight ticket split three ways."

"Then you're eligible for relief."

And when Charlie looked puzzled, the intricacies of Home Relief were explained to him. But Charlie shook his head.

"Chinese have own relief. Many years now. Me know what I do."

So he put a sign in his laundry window which read, "No more wash. Be back subsequently. Good-by, please."

Then he paid all his bills in town, packed his battered suitcase, handed over the keys of his laundry to his landlord, and took the first train to New York.

In his suitcase were all his worldly possessions: his work clothes, his soft heelless slippers, his well-worn copy of *The Four Books* containing the sayings of Confucius, his ivory chopsticks, which had served father and son for many generations, and would never be pawned or sold, his *kew-yun*, a back-scratcher (*kew-yun* meaning "don't have to ask anybody else to scratch my back"), a faded scroll of ancient Chinese writing done up in a pair of old trousers, and his bamboo fan.

Arriving in New York Charlie went immediately to his Kung Saw Fong, the headquarters of his *Kung Saw*, or family organization. It is due to the carefully planned

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

organization of this Kung Saw that Charlie did not have to go on relief.

And even when the depression got into full swing, and a newly elected President in Washington planned the New Deal as one way out, the Chinese were the one group of so-called foreigners in this country who did not ask for relief from Federal agencies.

Even when the Works Progress Administration in New York was going full blast a call was received for a Chinese interpreter. The assignment people thumbing through the files failed to locate a single Chinese applicant for a job. They were at a loss to know what to do when a clerk recalled there was on hand an American engineer who had spent some time in the Orient. The job was filled accordingly, but not by a Chinese.

And even when the Home Relief started operating in 1931 there were no Chinese families sitting on the doorsteps asking for assistance.

We already know Charlie's answer to that, and here it is in the headquarters of his family clan, the Kung Saw.

Charlie invited me to visit him at his Kung Saw and he promised to explain to me the Chinese plan of social security and the meaning of the Kung Saw and the way it operated. On my way down to Chinatown I saw a breadline forming. And here and there were those courageous old men—and young men, too—selling apples. As I was to discover, if it hadn't been for his Kung Saw, Charlie might have been selling apples too.

The address he gave me was on a side street. The building was unprepossessing. I climbed several flights of stairs, and at the end of a long, dark hall, came upon

the door to the Kung Saw. I rapped, and Charlie, smiling, let me in.

It was like stepping into another world. The club rooms were furnished in the restful simplicity so characteristic of Chinese good taste. Around the room were teakwood chairs, straight-backed but beautifully carved. On the walls were hung long scrolls with Chinese writing, and some most elaborate with flowers, birds, trees, and landscapes embroidered in silk.

"Those are what we call a '*Ho-Wah*,'" said Charlie.

They were gifts from other Kung Saws to the Sing family, with expressions of good wishes, good health, happiness, success and long life to the Sings. Some were merely bits of poems, illustrated with a bird on a tree, or something in keeping with the sentiment expressed. Others were sayings from the philosophers, especially selected, as Charlie explained, to "Say what our friends and neighbors think of us."

Colored lanterns made of rice paper gave a warmth and richness to the room, and carved screens inlaid with gold and silver leaf made their beauty complete. The doors and woodwork were all painted a Chinese red, trimmed in black. This made the dark pieces of heavy furniture stand out in striking contrast, and enhanced their loveliness.

At one end was the *sun hoy*, the altar. Behind a canopy of scrolled woodwork, encrusted with gold leaf and with hangings of red cloth, covered with spangles and bits of gay colored glass, stood the statue of the family god. Stanch and benign, his hands crossed in repose over his fat tummy, a quizzical smile on his peaceful face, he appeared wise enough to answer any question a

perplexed Sing might put to him. He was, I was told, the original Sing, the founder of the family, and that he was old was all too apparent, for his garments were those of antiquity.

Before him was a bowl filled with burning, fragrant joss sticks. And on each side a candle in an ornate holder. Peacock feathers, symbolizing good luck, placed in a case at his right, tickled his ears. Year after year he had stood there in his shrine, and I doubt if it had been dusted for many a month. But then, as Charlie told me, the older and more antique an altar looked, the better.

Not far away was a plain bulletin board on which were tacked strips of red paper covered with Chinese writing. In one corner, near a door that led to the small kitchen beyond, was the one incongruous note in the whole room: a plain burlap bag of rice. It contained one hundred pounds of rice, and was never empty. Charlie could help himself to this rice whenever he got hungry. And always on hand near the entrance door, night and day, stood a tea-cosy. The first thing Charlie did was to offer me a cup of tea, the cup of hospitality.

"Now," he said, "let us sit down and talk. You ask me questions, and I make proper answers."

Incidentally, Charlie speaks just as understandable English, when he wants to, as you and I. When I asked him why he so often speaks pidgin English to his customers, he replied with a twinkle in his eye, "They expect it of me, and I don't like to disappoint my clients. And they explain so much more carefully just what they want done and I say, 'Okay,' and if it doesn't turn out just as they want, they think it is because they didn't explain it properly to me."

"Why, when you closed your laundry, did you come to this Kung Saw?" I asked.

"Where else could I go?" Charlie replied, "This is my family guild. I belong. So do all my cousins. I became a member the day I was born. So did my father. So did my grandfather. So all my cousins."

These cousins, or *hing dai*, are not necessarily blood relatives. They have the same family name, that's all. It's as if all the Smiths in this country, because their name was Smith, called each other "Cousin." And being Smiths they are all members of the Smith clan.

In China, I have been told, there aren't more than some two hundred different family clans altogether. In this country there are estimated to be about sixty. And such is the importance placed on family that aristocracy in the Chinese way of looking at it consists in belonging to the family that has the greatest numbers. The more, in short, the merrier. From the circle of blood relatives in the home, to all members of the same name throughout the nation, such is China's strength. As a general rule, each family in every city where there is a Chinatown has a guild of their own with club rooms, the Kung Saw. The name itself means "I am with you, all pulling together."

There are a few family clans in this country great and powerful because of their superior numbers. There are also some members of a family with not many *hing dai* in certain American cities. They often join up with some other family of sparse numbers, so every Chinese in this country belongs to some family association, or Kung Saw.



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"Do you have to belong?" I asked Charlie, wondering if there was any coercion in the matter.

Charlie looked surprised. It really never had occurred to him to do otherwise. His family name was Sing, so he belonged to the Sing Kung Saw.

"It's always been that way," he said. "Every Chinese is a member, because in China family comes first. Family is important. The individual doesn't count. A bad Chinese never disgraces himself—always disgraces family."

"Does that ever happen?"

"It often happens," he replied soberly. "My cousins are human—the same as your cousins. Sometimes they make mistakes—sometimes bad mistakes. When that happens and the family name is dishonored, he ceases to be a cousin."

"And he changes his name?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. He takes the family name of some man he intensely dislikes, thus gracefully and delicately insulting that family. Should you go to jail you just register under the name of the man you hate most, or else take the name of the judge that sentenced you."

"Neat," I said.

"Very neat. And when you have made right the wrong you have done, and the elders in the Kung Saw forgive you, you take back again your own name. Thus the honor of the family is saved. But it is best to be always in good standing with your Kung Saw. I am. So was my father. So was my grandfather. We always paid our yearly dues. That is why, now I have lost my laundry, and am out of a job, the Kung Saw will take care of me."

He explained the system. Ever since Charlie was old enough to work he has been paying—as did his father and his grandfather before him—the sum of \$12 a year to his family guild. And so has each member of his Kung Saw, no matter if he be a wealthy importer with a yearly income running into thousands of dollars, or a humble laundryman who counts carefully his weekly earnings. Rich or poor, each of Charlie's cousins pays his yearly dues.

This money becomes a trust fund for the Kung Saw. It is wisely administered by the elders of the clan. The officers are changed yearly, so there's no possible chance of anyone getting too firm a grip on the money bags. This trust fund forms the basis of the social security the Chinese have for times of emergency and distress. And therefore Charlie, having always paid his dues, when the Year of the Monkey came around, could go directly to his Kung Saw for help.

"Why \$12?" I asked. "Why not \$10—or \$20—or—\$24?"

Charlie shrugged his shoulders. "It was \$12 in the beginning. It has always been \$12. It always will be \$12. A dollar a month is not too much to pay for peace of mind!"

So that's that. And no matter to which family a Chinese belongs, the yearly dues are exactly the same for every Kung Saw. Nobody knows just when it started in this country. The system has been in effect ever since the Chinese first came to the United States back in 1850.

"Suppose one of your cousins dies and has no money?" I asked.

"The Kung Saw gives him decent burial," replied

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

Charlie. "And if his widow is childless, she is taken care of as long as she lives."

"But suppose the time comes when a man can't pay this \$12 a year? Old age may have robbed him of his earning powers, or perhaps misfortune may have come to his business enterprises."

"The same as now," said Charlie humbly. He pointed to the wall near the altar upon which were hung the long strips of red paper.

"There hangs my *soo*, or debt paper. It hangs there until it is paid. If I cannot pay and die without paying, my sons will pay until my *soo* is removed from the wall, and then my poor bones will rest in peace. But if I am so unfortunate as to have no sons, then my nearest blood relative. Even should I decide to return to China, and should I owe the Kung Saw money, I cannot leave this country until every penny is paid. Men have been taken off the boat in San Francisco because they owe the Kung Saw money. And a *soo* must never be for more than \$250."

But Charlie and his cousins do not sit around and wait until their indebtedness to the Kung Saw reaches the \$250 limit. It wasn't long after Charlie arrived in New York that he was given work by one of his cousins. The Kung Saw will not tolerate for long an idler or a chiseler. If a man is incapacitated for work, he is given help. But if he can work and won't, he loses face with the Kung Saw, and his family disowns him.

"Should that happen," said Charlie, "what a disgrace! For if a man's own family won't give him help, how can he expect it from strangers?"

When the depression came, and unemployment be-

came a national problem, the Chinese, instead of putting men out of work, took more men on. You can always tell when "times are bad" by looking in your Chinese laundry. If there are four or five busy ironing shirts, where you have been used to seeing only one or possibly two—you will know. These are the prosperous laundryman's "cousins," and he is doing his duty by his Kung Saw. More fortunate than they in the Year of the Monkey, he is living up to the last letter of the Golden Rule.

So that is what happened to Charlie when he came to New York. One of his cousins gave him employment, a place to sleep, a few dollars a week for spending money, and his food.

Every Chinese employer always feeds his employees. That will explain why you will often see in Chinatown stores the clerks seated around a table eating their *shew yeh*, or midnight supper. The employer sits down with his help. Either the food is cooked in the basement or sent in from a nearby restaurant. This is an unwritten law among the Chinese, and the proper courtesy to those who are so gracious as to do the work a Chinese employer requests.

Lodging is also given. True, the wages may be small, but everybody has a share in the making of profits, and the Chinese need never fear unemployment in the Year of the Monkey—or any other year. And if the Kung Saw in the city where he lives should be short of funds, money is sent from the nearest Chinatown where his family has a Kung Saw.

Recently the head of a family died, a laundryman, leaving a widow and four young sons, the eldest being

twelve. Naturally he was unable to step into his father's shoes, his schooling was not yet completed, nor was he old enough to work and support the family. But the widow did not lose the laundry. One of the "cousins" sent by the Kung Saw took over the laundry. He was paid a weekly salary, and the rest was given to the widow and her four sons. And the family guild saw to it that he did his duty honestly and efficiently.

The Kung Saw will even, should the need arise, send a man clear across the country. Should a Chinese in Boston, say, lack work, but have a blood cousin in San Francisco who is prosperous, the Kung Saw in Boston will pass the man along to New York. There the Kung Saw will see he has car fare to the next Kung Saw of his family, be it in Cleveland or Chicago. And so on, until the day arrives when he appears in San Francisco.

Always when a Chinese is in need of financial aid he appeals first of all to his Kung Saw. He's been paying yearly dues for just this privilege.

The Year of the Monkey didn't last forever. But the years that followed swiftly were, as we know, almost as bad. And it would be wrong to say that during those years no Chinese went on relief rolls. Some did, but the percentage was very small. In the New York district that includes Chinatown and where there were 5,243 families of all nationalities being helped by Home Relief, only twenty-one of these families were of Chinese extraction. And when one considers the total Chinese population of Greater New York—estimated at close to thirty thousand—it will be seen that only seven out of every ten thousand accepted relief. In Boston the percentage was about the same. And that was true of Phila-

## YEAR OF THE MONKEY

delphia also. In San Francisco, with its large Chinese population, only two out of every thousand. Certainly the Chinese were not a burden to our government during those years.

And on investigation this percentage becomes even smaller when it is discovered that many listed on the relief rolls as Chinese came originally from Korea, Indo-China, or Hawaii. They are of mixed blood, and the Chinese do not consider them Chinese at all. Certainly they did not belong to any Kung Saw.

In all New York there were only four China Chinese accepting Home Relief. And when I asked Charlie Sing why, he answered that these families belonged to small Kung Saws, those who had few members and were finally forced to close their doors when their treasury was completely exhausted. Nor even then did these families ask for help from the government. In every instance assistance was practically forced on them by private relief agencies who first learned of their need by contact with the young boys and girls in schools and settlement houses. And according to the investigators who handled these cases, nothing was ever asked for by the Chinese, but what was offered was courteously received.

I know that during the time that the Federal Theater was going full blast, and various racial groups about New York City were having their own theaters—Yiddish, German, Negro, Spanish, and so forth—some of us conceived the idea that a Chinese theater, too, might prove interesting. So we drew up a project on nice white paper in the approved fashion and presented our idea of a Chinese theater with Chinese actors pre-

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

sending plays of old China for an American audience. But the project received "thumbs down." The reason was simple, it was one of the rules that actors employed in the Federal Theater should be on Home Relief; and there wasn't a single one of the actors we had in mind who was eligible. Because of the social security given them by their Kung Saws, they were not on the relief rolls.

There was even one Chinese woman, a widow, who failed to receive Home Relief because she was too honest. When inquiry was made concerning her resources, she showed some bank stock left her by her husband, but didn't know it could be turned in for cash. She promptly sold the stock, living on what it brought.

In February of 1936 the Dragon danced as usual in the streets of Chinatown during the New Year festivities. The drums thundered and the cymbals whanged. Following the Dragon down the street came some Chinese girls holding by the four corners two flags: an American flag and a Chinese flag. As they passed along, Chinese standing on the sidewalks dropped money into these flags.

"What are they doing?" I asked a Chinese friend.

"I don't know," was the evasive answer. "Holiday maybe."

It wasn't until a few days later that I read in the papers that the money thus collected was given to the American Red Cross for the flood relief, for, as you remember, the Mississippi River had gone on a rampage that year. It was presented by the Chinese Benevolent Association representing forty-two organizations in

## YEAR OF THE MONKEY

Chinatown. The sum total of the collection on that day was \$1,530.07. I like that seven cents. It somehow is another bit of evidence to back up the reports one hears of Chinese honesty. Nor was that all. Thirty thousand dollars was raised in China by the Nanking government and sent to this country to help the flood sufferers. The American Red Cross has been very generous to other nations in times of disaster and distress. But in the year of our great flood, China was the only government that remembered, and came to our assistance when we needed help.

The Year of the Monkey has gone. In 1938 came the Year of the Tiger—and, according to Charlie Sing, that's a hopeful and a good year. He got his laundry back again. His *soo* paper was removed from the wall of his Kung Saw. He is again back at his place of business speaking pidgin English to his customers, and greeting them with a smile.

I don't think we need worry about Charlie and his Chinese *hing dai*—they won't be a burden to Uncle Sam when the Year of the Monkey comes again. They may even do something nice for us, probably saying, "Okay, please."



## NO UNIONS—NO STRIKES

.....

OCCASIONALLY Mr. Wu went sightseeing. Our American ways and customs intrigued him. He loved poking his nose about New York, and enjoyed equally the out-of-the-way corners of this great city as well as the more obvious places of interest. So on clear days, armed with his umbrella, he'd go trotting around, sometimes visiting Bronx Park, sometimes the Battery, and finding the docks along the water front on West Street just as exciting as Fifth Avenue during the shopping hour.

He once spent a whole day on the top of the Empire State Building, and sat all afternoon gazing dreamily across the Hudson toward the west, where far beyond the distant horizon lay his beloved China. He enjoyed contrasting the two cultures of China and the Western world. It was the balancing of the one against the other that made Mr. Wu not only tolerant but also broad-minded. Some things about us he didn't understand. At times he didn't bother to make the attempt.

I remember one afternoon I ran into him on one of our uptown streets. He was standing quiet at one side, unobserved by the crowds that rushed past him. A

## NO UNIONS—NO STRIKES

silent, unobtrusive figure, watching and seeing everything, and arriving, at length, at his own sane conclusions. Yet this day he frowned ever so slightly, and puzzled bewilderment stole over his placid features.

"It is very, very strange," he said.



Across the street noisy pickets carrying banners proclaiming their union affiliations, and shouting, "Do not patronize this store!" were marching around and around in a circle.

"What's troubling you?" I asked Mr. Wu.

"I do not understand," he replied, pointing to the picket line. "It is such very, very bad manners."

"To ask for a raise in wages and better working conditions?"

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"No. But for showing such a lack of gratitude toward the manager for the work he has given them. It makes him lose face. They lose much face too, for their actions show they have displayed bad judgment in working for a man who did not treat them fairly. Something must be very wrong. If the manager were a good employer and they were good workers, there would be no need for this."

"Don't the Chinese ever go on strike?" I asked.

"It has happened only once," he replied apologetically. "And that was last winter in San Francisco. Even the editor of the *Chinese Digest* in which I read a report made the comment, 'The first organized large scale labor strike between Chinatown workers and Chinatown employers occurred here recently, a fact which is history making in the life of the Chinese in America.' "

Mr. Wu sighed and again shook his head. "It is very baffling and very sad—but perhaps it is the new way. When Chinese workers parade with banners in front of their own stores saying, 'Please do not buy here,'—alas, I do not consider it good philosophy."

"I thought it had something to do with economics," I said.

"Up to now the Chinese engaged in business in this country have had no unions—and therefore no strikes."

"But it can't be as simple as all that?"

"Come with me to a quiet spot where we can sip tea and I shall explain."

Over our teacups in a secluded corner of an uptown restaurant Mr. Wu explained the Chinese method of cooperative ownership in business.

The Chinese do not believe in unions because

of three philosophical ideas. First there is the saying, "Do not put all your eggs in one basket." The second is, "Do not break another man's rice bowl." That is being a trifle more specific about the Golden Rule, which means the same in any language. And the third summing up these two is, "Life is for the enjoyment of one's self and one's sons."

These ideas are not new. They have been tried and found good in old China, and having stood the test of time have become deeply rooted in Chinese life.

While the Chinese living in this country have adjusted themselves to our standards of living—especially has this been true of recent years—and perhaps have modified some of their ways to fit more neatly into our scheme of things, they still cling, perhaps wisely, to many of their old manners and customs. Especially in their manner of communal living. So what had been found workable in old China, they put into practice among themselves in America.

When they first began to settle in California about 1850, they were looked upon as a strange and alien people. As a result they were not absorbed into American business. They had to make their own living in their own way. The result was that they engaged in those occupations that were expected of them: laundries, restaurants, and after a time, curio stores. From running a laundry or a restaurant to becoming an importer of Chinese goods is the history of more than one Chinese. But they did what was expected of them. The Chinese like to please their neighbors and cause as little trouble as possible. In that way, they believe, they can live in peace in a foreign country.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

So when a Chinese in the early days embarked upon his own business it was not possible for him to go to a bank to borrow the necessary capital. He had to depend upon his own savings, or else turn to his own people. Naturally first of all he approached the members of his own family, his *hing dai*.

When Mr. Wu was a young man, so he told me, he had some \$3,000, an inheritance from his father. He wanted to start a restaurant. But he needed \$5,000. And since it was the custom—it was even done this way in old China—he approached his cousins. His father had been an honored member of the Wu Kung Saw, and the *hing dai* raised for him the other \$2,000.

Had he failed with his cousins, he would have gone to his friends. That is not strictly China Chinese, but often necessary in this country where one's own family may be small in numbers.

Of course, since he had put up most of the capital and the idea of opening a restaurant was his, he became the manager. For the workers, naturally the first choice went to the cousins who had invested with him in his enterprise. Some had sons or nephews they thought should be employed. These made up the staff. In short, the workers in the restaurant were also the owners.

The next time you dine in a Chinese restaurant, you may be served by one of the owners or his son. And visitors in Chinatown will often see the manager having his evening meal at the same table with the waiters and the cook.

"How beautifully democratic!" once exclaimed a dowager witnessing such a scene.

It's not a self-conscious display of democracy at all. It's the shareholders in the business having their supper together. Of course it's all charged to the restaurant—that's the custom—but since it comes out of the profits in the long run, they are all paying their share.

Some waiters may have more stock in the business than others. Perhaps even a waiter may be the principal owner, and the manager, or head waiter, merely the man who can put up the best front to the customers. I know of one restaurant in Chinatown where an old man now and then waits upon table. He is really the owner of the restaurant. One of his nephews, a handsome young man with charming manners, plays the role of manager and greets the guests. But the old man has a better time of it. He waits upon the people he likes, and he hears at first hand their praise of the food and the service, and lets the "manager" calm down the dissatisfied customer and iron out all complaints. He avoids a lot of trouble, and is in a better position, also, to know what is going on.

Now having this restaurant, of which he was the manager, was not enough for Mr. Wu. He is, first of all, a realist. One typically Chinese trait is that they accept failure as a fact. They do not expect to fail, of course. But they know it is easier to fail than to succeed. And consequently they are prepared for it. And should their efforts bear fruit, how much more fun it is to be delightfully surprised when success and good fortune come their way.

"Suppose my restaurant should not attract customers," said Mr. Wu. "Good or bad fortune befalls a man when he least expects it. Sometimes the sky is clouded

over. At other times bright with sunshine. And there's nothing you can do about good or bad weather. You must accept it. Suppose my restaurant should fail and the money my cousins entrusted me with should vanish into thin air? I should lose much face. It would prove I was not a smart businessman. Hence, I was prepared for just such an emergency. I did not put all my eggs in one basket."

Across the street was another restaurant, with just as bright a sign outside, just as tempting prices, and just as good a cook. It was Mr. Wu's most obvious rival.

The manager was also Mr. Wu's friend. And so one evening over teacups the two of them had a long talk. It ended with a very pleasing arrangement. They traded a few shares in each other's business. So instead of gazing enviously from behind the window shades when customers flocked into one restaurant and not the other, they both sat down undisturbed behind their cash registers, knowing no matter where visitors dined, they'd both have a profit.

"It brought peace into our lives," chuckled Mr. Wu. "Nor did I stop there. I also purchased some shares in other restaurants on other streets. And that saved me many a headache worrying about competition. It also made possible for more of my cousins to have employment. It is better to have an interest in several rice bowls than own completely the one you are holding in your hands. Should it break—what then? But when you know there are other rice bowls handy, you can have peace of mind. And your rivals in the same business cease to become rivals, but business partners all."

He smiled as he continued. "There's even more. One

of my cousins was in bad health. Our family felt he should have more fresh air, so we all bought a farm not far from the city. Here he raised vegetables and chickens. Ultimately these would be served in the various restaurants where we held shares. But we felt he should make a nice profit, so we all bought an interest in a *jop for po*, a general merchandise store. The farmer sold his vegetables to the store. The store sold us the farm produce. The farmer and the storekeepers dined at the restaurant—so all the way around we all made a profit."

"Buying and selling from yourselves," I said.

"Exactly. Goods passed from my right hand to my left hand, and in passing always left some cash in my upturned palm."

"But how are these various businesses administered?" I asked.

"In every place we have a manager, usually the man who owns the largest share of stock. Once every month a *yuet git*, or statement, is sent to all shareholders. And then when there's a profit, dividends are declared."

"At stated times?" I asked.

"No, whenever the manager feels like it. It's so much pleasanter to be surprised at receiving money than to expect it on a certain date and not get it. So each shareholder, because of the monthly *yuet git*, knows exactly how his various enterprises are thriving. It is very simple. So many shares here—so many there—and a man's sons, or his cousins, or himself at work. And since they all own at least part of the business, why have unions? And having no unions—no strikes!"



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"But you did say something about a strike in San Francisco?" I suggested, perhaps rudely.

"Now that you mention it—I did," he smiled back. "Unfortunately the workers did not have a share in the business. It was not cooperatively owned. The manager departed from the custom. And when that happens, trouble ensues."

"But suppose even in one of the cooperatively owned businesses one of the workers doesn't like the manager, can't get along with him? Suppose he doesn't like the place where he is working? The hours may be long, the working conditions bad, and he has all the usual complaints of a disgruntled worker—what then?"

Mr. Wu shrugged his shoulders. "If he doesn't like the place where he is engaged, he doesn't have to work there. He can go somewhere else where he has an interest. Or if he doesn't want to work at all, he can sit around all day. But if he sits and does nothing, how will he fill his rice bowl? And should he be a lazy, good-for-nothing, churlish fellow, his family would soon discipline him. No man can be wholly happy when he is embarrassed in public and private with a poor relation. It makes him lose face. And if a man isn't willing to work and do his share, his family would not be willing to support him. He would be brought before the elders of the Kung Saw and given a rice bowl. It is up to him to keep that rice bowl filled."

"But is there no rivalry at all among the Chinese?" I asked. "No competition in business? One man cannot obviously own shares in all the restaurants in this country."

"Business is business—no matter what a man's race or

country," replied Mr. Wu soberly. "And if a rival won't sell you a share, it is often a pleasure to outwit him. And if he is so stupid as to let you take the rice in his bowl, he deserves it. But always leave him his rice bowl, empty though it may be. Somebody may put a few grains of rice there—and who knows?—tomorrow those grains may sprout and you may want to do business with him again sometime.

"Once in a restaurant where I had a few shares the manager embezzled \$2,000. The American way, I suppose, would be to hustle him off to jail. But what good would that do? It wouldn't mean we'd get our money back. So the shareholders held a meeting and discussed the matter carefully. We finally decided to keep him on as manager of the restaurant. But we took his shares for security, and gave him a regular weekly salary with the understanding that out of that salary he was to pay back a certain amount each week. In that way we saved his face, and left him his rice bowl. We also saved our own face, for what would our friends think of us and our judgment if it should be known we had entrusted our money to a man who was not wholly honest? He is now working hard, paying back what he stole, and everybody is happy."

"Can these shares in a business ever be bought in an open market?" I asked.

Mr. Wu looked shocked. "We have no stock market such as is operated in Wall Street. Should a Chinese decide to go to China to spend his last days in the home of his ancestors, he would sell the shares in his various enterprises. First he would approach his family, then his friends. There is no gambling with business shares.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

True, a man may play a game of chance with the cash in his pocket, but not with the means of keeping his rice bowl filled. Gambling is a game to be played for amusement only. Is there any pleasure to be derived from risking all the rice in your rice bowl?"

Perhaps here is yet another reason why in the Year of the Monkey and the panic in Wall Street, the Chinese still kept open their various businesses. There was no watered stock in their enterprises, and no ticker tape to spell disaster. Money doesn't make money with the Chinese. But work does keep a man's rice bowl filled.

"But are there no organizations of any kind binding the workers together?" I asked. "What about the Chinese Laundry Alliance? It sounds like the name of a union."

"It's an association, not a union," he replied. "True, every laundryman belongs to the Alliance in his city and pays yearly dues of \$2. But this Alliance merely acts as go-between for the Chinese and the Americans with whom he does business. It attends to the signing of the leases with the American landlords, and such problems as may arise. The same is true of the Restaurant Association. Neither of these associations dictates to the workers wages, prices, or working hours. How can you tell a man what to charge when he is operating his own business?"

"That being true," I said, "all Chinese workers are also capitalists."

"In a sense," and the idea seemed to amuse him. "Yet no man would dream of gaining control of all the laundries in one city, for example. What would he do with them? He wouldn't have enough sons to operate them

all. But instead of owning all the laundries, he might have shares in several of them. Then if one fails, he still won't have all his eggs in one basket. No, it is not anything like the capitalist system."

"But surely all the wealth is not equally shared?" I asked.

"Of course not," he answered. "Some men obviously have more than others, just as some men are more energetic, more honest, and more saving. The individual always has an equal opportunity with his fellow men. We try, of course, to see that everyone is prosperous. If my rice bowl is filled to overflowing, why shouldn't I pass on my good fortune? Better to let my neighbor share with me my prosperity than to arouse envy in him and force him to attempt to take away my riches at the point, shall we say, of a gun? Let us live in peace, first with our own families, then with our neighbors. And I think, too," he added sadly, "much of the trouble between nations might be solved if one country would not attempt to break the other country's rice bowl. As with the individual, so it should be with nations. Let each have a share in the other's rice bowl. When that happens, there will be eternal peace in the world. Man's enemy should not be man. No, not as long as there is the stormy sea to conquer, the burning rays of the sun that dries up the rice fields, and the raging waters of the flood that destroys the labor of your hands."

He shook his head sadly with all the puzzled bewilderment of a gentle philosopher.

"But suppose one family does become so wealthy and so powerful that it overrides the other families and

takes over their laundries and restaurants? What then?"

"We have worked out the answer to that, too," he said. "Years ago when the Chinese first settled in this country that almost happened. But we so organized our people that that sort of monopoly cannot occur."

"Just how?"

He glanced about him. We were quite alone. So he leaned over and whispered mysteriously, "The tongs!"

Then he smiled. It pleased his sense of humor to be mysterious, for he knew the great air of secrecy that surrounds the much-talked-about tongs in this country.

## POETIC GUNMEN

.....

SOMEHOW many people whenever they think of the Chinese in this country immediately associate in their minds that newspaper headline, "Tong War!" Probably no one part of Chinese life in America has been so publicized as the tongs and their so-called wars.

And to many persons, skimming casually the papers and reading the lurid tales of our fiction writers, the tongs are synonymous with murder, crime, and torturous death. Perhaps they even conclude that the Chinese as a race, both at home and abroad, spend their entire leisure time slinking through dark alleyways and throwing hatchets at each other from their concealed hiding places in long flowing sleeves. They believe the tongs to be some sort of secret society brought over from China, when as a matter of fact the tongs are as much American in their origin as chop suey.

And the inspiration for the tongs came from an observation of our own American way of doing things. We must look back to those turbulent days of the Gold Rush in California. It was a ruthless age. Man fighting man for the gold that was to be had for the taking was at his primitive worst. Of law and order there was none.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

Even among our own people outlaws ruled and dispensed their own brand of indecent justice at the point of a gun. To combat this banditry the better class of people formed a "Vigilance Committee" to uphold the laws and see that justice was properly administered.

The turmoil of life on the Barbary Coast among those pioneers in California was also the turmoil of life among the Chinese living there. Certain families, because of their power in numbers, were having things pretty much their own way.

Observing how the Americans had used the vigilantes to bring about law and order, a certain young Chinese student conceived the plan that if it worked with the Americans, it should also prove effective with the Chinese against their oppressors. There should be some sort of check on the all-powerful Kung Saws. So this Chinese student appealed to an older merchant, one Mock Wah by name, according to this story. The Mocks were a small family group. And they had endured and suffered much from the stronger families. There were other families, too, whose Kung Saws were unimportant. So Mock Wah called them all together, and explained how among the Americans the Vigilance Committees had brought about justice and fair play.

And in 1870 the first tong in this country was organized. It was the Kwong Dock Tong and was a combination of several of the small and oppressed family clans. The word "tong" means simply "association." And the name of the first tong, the Kwong Dock Tong, translated means "An association for the broadening of the humane side of man."

Like our own vigilantes the tongs set out to combat

evil in those early days. Their methods were not wholly those of sweetness and prayer. And murders of one sort or another took place until the cleansing process was more or less thorough. We must not forget that our Vigilance committees hanged offenders sometimes with—sometimes without—a trial. But order and peace were restored and the oppressors learned the ways of fair play and justice.

However, the tongs received a black name, and ever since that time, let a Chinese be found stabbed, and immediately the newspapers, even if the murderer be a member of another race, cry, "Tong killing."

Today, so Mr. Wu told me, the tongs fulfill the purpose for which they were originally intended; they serve as a check upon any one family that might become too powerful. As a matter of fact the tongs in the Chinatowns of our country correspond to our own service clubs, such as Rotary, the Lions, Kiwanis, and so forth. In membership they are composed of the various Chinese businessmen banded together for mutual interest and benefit.

There are two tongs that are mentioned most in our newspapers: the On Leong Tong and the Hip Sing Tong. Translated the name of the On Leong Tong means "Association of Peaceful Merchants," and that of Hip Sing Tong, "The Association United for Victory."

Like our various service clubs the tongs have headquarters, regular meetings, and also national officers. They have their own pet charities, also, take care of their members when the need arises, and as Mr. Wu



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

told me with a twinkle in his eye, "We listen to long speeches, too."

But there are some differences, of course. They wouldn't be Chinese "Rotary Clubs" if there weren't. On the one hand they have the "Association of Peaceful Merchants," and on the other hand the "Association United for Victory"—rivals in business if you wish to put it that way. And being rivals, and being Chinese, also, they are very considerate and very polite in their rivalry.

Each tong has a certain territory, a certain district, in which it does business. The On Leong Tong, for instance, grants its members permission to operate on the west side only of Main Street. The Hip Sings have their stores on the east side only. In New York's Chinatown, Mott Street is the approved stamping ground of the On Leongs, while some of Pell and Doyer streets belong to the Hip Sings.

The whole city, where Chinese restaurants and laundries exist, is also divided up into territories. In that manner too much competition is eliminated. "The Friendly Merchants" all do business together in certain parts of town, and often, as we have seen, own shares in each other's restaurants. But should a member of the On Leongs move into Hip Sing territory, or vice versa, then trouble starts. And these fights to keep the other fellow on his own side of the fence are called "Tong Wars."

But the wise Chinese also take a precaution. The warfare is never conducted between the merchants themselves. Never, even in the early days in California, would a dignified Chinese "Rotarian" punch in the

nose or fire a revolver in the direction of a rival Chinese "Kiwanian." He might have a pistol fired in his direction, too. And that wouldn't make sense. So astutely the peace-loving merchant hires an armed guard, or *boo how doy*, sometimes poetically called "hatchetmen," although nobody knows just why. For the Chinese have discovered that a pistol shot is quicker, more effective, and also more merciful.

And it is these "hatchetmen" who carry on the warfare. They are paid a yearly salary, even in times of peace. And when a tong war started, it was these *boo how doy* who did the shooting. The merchants themselves did not descend to such crudities. And even while the war was on, two merchants of the warring tongs would meet on the street, bow politely, smile, exchange flowery words of insult, then go their separate ways, quite safe. It was the hired gunmen who took the risks.

But even the tong wars were conducted in a gentlemanly fashion. There was no hit-or-miss, promiscuous killing as with our rival gangsters and their gunmen. There were certain rules of the game that the Chinese observed, and these rules were simple.

Should one tong consider an injustice had been committed, and one of its members outraged by another tong, a *chun hung* was posted on the bulletin boards of Chinatown. This *chun hung* was a written challenge to the opposing tong.

I have never seen one, but I've been told they were beautifully written, combining subtle aspersions concerning the legitimacy of one's birth and drawing comparisons with the most obnoxious traits of wild ani-

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

mals. They invariably ended with the statement that since these things were true, there was nothing left for good men and true but to exterminate such "scum upon the earth." Therefore a time and place for battle was set.

In reply the tong receiving this challenge would post its *chun hung*, topping these insults with even more beautifully expressed but viler implications, and accepting the challenge in no uncertain terms.

From the moment of the posting of these *chun hungs*, usually side by side, all would be peaceful in Chinatown. Doyer Street in New York was once upon a time the favorite battleground. And midnight usually the hour.

In the windows above the street the rival merchants sat secure and safe, peeping out occasionally from behind curtains. In the street below as the hour of midnight approached the *boo how doy* walked quietly up and down, exchanging greetings of nicely phrased insults. Nothing seemed amiss. On the surface all was serene and calm. Silent and watchful the merchants waited.

Exactly on the stroke of midnight, guns appeared as if from nowhere. They blazed and spattered. The tong war was on. The hired gunmen were merrily shooting each other. Just as suddenly as it all started, so it ended, with the arrival of the police. Nobody ever knew who had slain who, but the dead were given honorable burial, and the survivors had fled to safety. But each side had had its insults repaid with blood, and justice in the Chinese manner had been done.

In the old days when trouble started in one city, it

quickly spread to all other Chinatowns where there were branches of the fighting tongs. But often, just as warfare started swiftly, it ended just as swiftly. When an equal number of *boo how doy* on each side had been killed, the tong war was officially over. They had both proved their strength. They were equal in power, and so why continue the bloodshed any longer?

Then the merchants would get together and have a banquet; toast each other in Chinese wine, enjoy all their favorite dishes, and end by posting peace notices on the bulletin boards where before the threatening *chun hungs* had been displayed.

The last tong war in this country was of brief duration. It took place in 1933. And as Mr. Wu said, it is extremely doubtful that there will ever be another. The present conflict in China has ironed out all internal disputes among the Chinese in this country, and united them for but one common purpose—the emergency existing in their native land.

“With an enemy on our threshold,” said Mr. Wu, “all families should be as brothers.”

Then, too, the Chinese have discovered that tong wars have brought them adverse publicity. If the newspapers mention a tong war, people remain away from the Chinese restaurants, and business falls off for everybody concerned. The old days are over, anyway, and just as in the wild and woolly West, the Vigilance Committees are no more, the tongs have again become genuine associations of Peaceful Merchants, and as such function for the betterment of the community.

Today in Chinatown all trouble that may arise between members of one family Kung Saw is settled

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

within the four walls of their family headquarters. Should any argument arise between members of different families, it is settled in the tong club rooms. And disputes that in the old days would have led to bloodshed are today brought into the open in the halls of the Chinese Benevolent Association. This association, composed of elders from all organizations in Chinatown, is their supreme authority.

And the spirit of cooperative endeavor in business enterprise is kept truly cooperative. It's "One for all, and all for one" in actual practice.

The old lady from Dubuque who wanders about our Chinatown need have no fear of hatchetmen. In all the tong wars of former days an innocent bystander was never injured, anyway. And the young couple from Missouri can look upon the brightly lighted balconies of the tongs and know there are no hidden machines of torture.

I was invited once, by the father of some of my friends, to visit the headquarters of one of the tongs. The club rooms were fitted up in a style similar to the Kung Saw of Charlie Sing: with a kitchen in the back, *Ho-Wahs* on the walls, and carved teakwood furniture everywhere. I wasn't frightened. I had no reason to be. We sat down, chatted, and had a cup of tea. It was a pleasant occasion, no different from being a guest in any other gentlemen's club.

And I was told a story which illustrates the present-day "tong warfare." It seems that on one of the Chinese holidays, two members of the same tong got into an argument. Words were bandied about, and finally blows were struck. The fighters were immediately sepa-

rated and taken to the tong rooms. Here the affair was aired in the open.

And for fighting in public, both men were fined. But one received a heavier fine than the other. This was not the man who started the argument, but the man who struck the first blow. He was considered the real offender.

"What was the matter with your father?" it was asked him. "Was he so lacking in scholarship and knowledge of the wisdom of the philosophers that he did not teach you the proper use of words? Are you so ignorant, so lacking in arguments, so poor in the knowledge of poetic phrases that you must strike a blow to win your point?"

## CALL FOR AND DELIVER

.....

WE ARE very fond of our "Charlie." He lives around the corner a few blocks away and comes for our laundry every Monday morning and returns it promptly on Saturday, and so far I haven't lost a single shirt. I don't think I ever will, either.

"Charlie's" last name is Kwong, I believe. But I'm not certain—for reasons I shall explain later—even though that is the name on the window of his laundry. "Charlie Kwong—Laundry Called For and Delivered," it says.

When he first started to do our laundry he asked what hour he should call.

"Around ten o'clock," I answered.

"Okay," he said. "Ten o'clock."

And on the dot he is at the door. I set my watch by his arrival.

"*How la ma?*" I say to "Charlie."

"*Ho!*" he answers, beaming. "Nice day morning."

Whether the thermometer is sky high and the city streets sizzling hot with the heat bouncing off the pavements, or whether there's a blizzard raging and icy winds are blowing a twenty-mile-an-hour gale, "Char-

lie" always answers, "*Ho.*" His unfailing good humor puts me to shame.

One day "Charlie" said to me, "History books all wrong. Columbus no discover America."

"Who did then?" I asked, trying politely to conceal my ignorance.

"A Chinese laundryman by the name of 'Charlie,' " he answered.

"When was that?" I asked.

"The year 935," he replied. "This laundryman and his six sons sailed across the Pacific Ocean in a leaky junk to start laundry in this country. They land on shore of California. Down to the water's edge come a band of very naked Indians. This laundryman look at their unclothed bodies and shake his head sadly.

"Time not yet ripe for laundries in this country. People no wear clothes. I go home and come back in one thousand years. Good-by. . . . Good-by."

That was the first time I discovered that "Charlie"—usually so silent—had a sense of humor. I never called him "Charlie" after that, either. I say "Kwong," now.

Once I said "*Kwong sin saang*," which is the same as saying, "Mr. Kwong—my elder—one born before me." For his hair is turning white, and he isn't any longer a young man. And Confucius has said that one's elders, no matter what their station in life, should be addressed with respect. This so pleased Kwong that the next week he came for our laundry he brought me a package of jasmine tea.

Who first called the Chinese laundrymen "Charlie," I do not know. Probably it was the same waggish fellow who named all Pullman porters "George," all bartend-



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

ers "Mike," and all Southern gentlemen, with or without a goatee, "Colonel."

We are sometimes inclined to think of the Chinese as a race of laundrymen. Perhaps that is because the public comes in closer contact with Chinese in laundries than in any other business outside of restaurants. As a matter of fact, if you care to take a glance at the Census reports, you will find in gainful occupations in this country among the Chinese only one laundryman to every four or five Chinese engaged in other enterprises.

But where the Chinese laundryman in your neighborhood lives just around the corner, and you pass his laundry every day and see him through the open door busily ironing shirts, the other four or five of his countrymen you rarely meet. So your patient Chinese laundryman becomes almost a symbol of his race in this country.

And his acquaintance is worth cultivating, too. He may be silent and not very communicative. He may merely smile at you and say nothing at all when you come for your laundry. He may not enter into the round of small gossip and neighborhood affairs. He may be entirely apart from the life that goes on about him.

But that isn't because he is a slinking, sinister Chinese—although he does wear soft slippers and shuffles along—and it isn't because he doesn't like you.

He remains silent for two very good reasons. One reason is, you have never given him an opportunity to do anything else. And your laundryman is well mannered. He will not thrust his acquaintance on you.

## CALL FOR AND DELIVER

Then, too, he reasons in this manner, "Who is this stranger who darkens my door—a friend or an enemy? Before I give him my friendship, let me first find out."

The hoodlums in the neighborhood haven't always been kind to the Chinese laundryman. One night I was on my way home and passed Kwong's laundry. The light was still burning, and Kwong was in distress. He beckoned me to come in. Then he showed me his bad fortune: a pile of shirts, freshly ironed, lying on the floor all dirty and mussed.

Some hoodlums in the neighborhood, so Kwong told me, came into the laundry and threw all the shirts from the counter onto the floor.

"Why didn't you call the police?" I asked.

"What good?" he replied, shrugging his shoulders. "I go yell after them, chase them down the street with meat ax, the police think me secret murderer, and I get put in jail. No like. No. I mind my own business. Do all shirts over again. But I think I get some lichee nuts, maybe. Next time rough young boys come in I say to them, 'No throw shirts on floor. Have nut instead.' Maybe I be friend. They be friend. Maybe. Maybe."

With that approach, ultimately—even though it may take a long, long time—Kwong will win. He has but one wish, and that is to live in peace with his neighbors.

So he remains silent, grunts his answers, often pretends he "No speak English." He lets the stranger do all the talking. Rather a good way to discover his business.

"He who hesitates and speaks little need not be stupid; nor is a glib and fluent speaker necessarily wise," so runs an old Chinese proverb.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"The peaceful man preserves silence; in smooth water there is no current," so says another.

And a third, "Better not speak at all than say what is useless."

So your laundryman by his silence is really only displaying good manners. And he often appears to be stupid only that he may be wise. And if he asks you to repeat your wishes several times, it isn't always that he doesn't understand, but that he wants you to be exact. "Yes" is "yes," and "no" is "no" to him.

I have found that the best way to get the service from Kwong I wish is to tell him exactly, deliberately, and carefully just how much starch I want in my shirts. And I get so much. No more, no less. And it will be that way just as long as Kwong irons my shirts.

One way to win the friendship of your Chinese laundryman is to display some friendliness toward him. And the best approach is in the Chinese manner. It's very simple really. When the Chinese New Year comes around—and if you ask him he'll tell you the exact date, usually sometime around the first of February—the proper thing to do is to take him some tangerines or oranges. Not more than twelve, and not less than two. Don't wrap them up in fancy paper, either. Just in the paper bag you got them in. This is a *git gau*, meaning "good fruit."

Tangerines are a symbol of good luck. "*Git*" also means "good luck," and since the name for tangerine in Chinese has the same pronunciation, the meaning of the symbol is clear.

So your gift of tangerines is the Chinese way of wishing him "Good luck" during the coming year. And if

he hands you half the tangerines back—don't be surprised. Take them. It's the custom and he's saying, "I do not take all the good luck, but give you some, too."

And on our Christmas he may bring you a present: a package of tea or a bag of lichee nuts. That's his way of saying he likes and approves of you as a person. He doesn't expect you to return the gift, either. He has heard that Christmas is one of our Festivals or Feast Days, and on that day, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And so he finds pleasure in observing our customs in our way, and displaying good manners in doing the proper thing.

And should you remember to take him on his New Year's a *git gau* he'll be your friend for life.

And once you become acquainted with your laundryman you'll find him a humorous and talkative fellow. He likes his little joke, even though he may not always laugh outright. But a smile lurks in the corners of his mouth and a twinkle in his eye.

He knows a lot about you, too, that you don't suspect. People who stand silent listening always do. And even though your name on the laundry ticket may be Norman Leavenworth Pendergrats, Jr., the laundryman has a nickname all his own that would not only surprise but perhaps startle you. But don't be alarmed. It is nothing insulting, nor offensive. But it may be humorous, and certainly will be poetic.

I know one laundryman who, being something of a philosopher, writes—in Chinese, of course—little mottoes to his customers telling them what he thinks of them. Pleasant little mottoes, for the most part, culled from the sayings of the wise old men.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

To an egotistical young chap he wrote, "When one is fifty, the errors of forty-nine years become apparent."

To an ardent prohibitionist he said, "The best of life is but intoxication."

And to an overgarrulous communist, "When you talk with a man upon a subject with whom your views are not in agreement, then even half a sentence is too much."

He may even have his little joke when it comes to naming his laundry. Not a robust joke that calls for a howl of laughter, but the quiet good-natured humor that brings forth only a smile. "Sang Lee" for example. "Sun W. Light" is another. Sun is an old Chinese name. So is Light. No one man would have the name of Sun Light. It would be the same as if a laundry was called the "Willkie Roosevelt." Perhaps in this case the "W" stands for the real name of the owner, Woo, Wong, or Wang, disguised by the period.

You have to read the names rather fast to get the point of the joke. They are invariably good Chinese words. But it's the combination said rapidly that will disclose to you what the sly laundryman is trying to say. I passed a laundry one day that was called "The Yang Kee Laundry." Another was named "Hap Lee." And so it goes.

The present occupant of this laundry may not be a Mr. Lee at all, even though his customers always call him that. But that was the name on the window when he took it over. And some day he may be gone, and another Chinese is busy ironing shirts at this laundry. But it's still called "Hap Lee."

What has happened is a typical business arrangement

among the Chinese. Suppose twenty years ago at No. 1 Blank Street a Chinese by the name of Wong opened a laundry. Business was good, and many bundles were brought to his door. Then one day Wong closed his laundry and the store was vacant. In time it was rented to some American and became a grocery store, or some other sort of business place. Five, six years passed. The grocery went out of existence. Perhaps even the landlord on the property changed. Then one day another Chinese appeared and rented the place, and on the window was again the name, "Wong, Hand Laundry. Call For and Deliver." But it wasn't the old Wong, nor anybody in the least resembling him. On the surface this seems the natural course of events.

But there was a business transaction in Chinatown that the landlord never knew about, and doesn't concern him in the slightest.

The original Wong at No. 1 Blank Street had discovered that this location was a good one. He had been successful there, and good luck had been his. The God of Flourishing Cash had smiled upon No. 1 Blank Street. So Wong when he moved elsewhere went to Chinatown and there on the public bulletin boards on the street posted a *chung hong*.

This *chung hong* is a notice to the effect that he, Wong, having been successful at No. 1 Blank Street, hereby claims for all time that particular location as his own. And time may pass—and other stores come and go at this address—but should another Chinese ever want to open a laundry at 1 Blank Street he must first go to Wong and buy this privilege from him. This privilege is called a *po-dai*.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

It's a Chinese business deal in a Chinese manner between Chinese, and no outsider is ever the wiser. The price varies, of course, according to the neighborhood and the particular location. And the new laundryman takes the original tenant's name, since it is already stamped with good luck.

Originally the *po-dai* was used to protect a tenant from those who might be envious of his business and might connive with the landlord to discontinue the tenant's lease and rent the property for themselves. So the *po-dai* was introduced to discourage such practices. And while it is possible that the *po-dai* has, in some instances, given rise to certain abuses, still it is not, in a sense, much different from an American's purchase of "good will" when he buys an already established business.

It extends, so I am told, to any original or fresh idea that a Chinese may have for making money. This idea is his until he wishes to sell. It is his way of copyrighting an idea, of protecting his rights and his priority.

Whatever one may think of Chinese laundrymen, no one can claim they aren't industrious. When the first streak of morning light comes seeping through the city streets Kwong is up. The rattle of milk wagons is his alarm clock.

He lives in the back room of the laundry where he has a cot, a small table, a stove of sorts, and his personal belongings.

His breakfast consists of a cup of hot tea. This is the first eye-opener of the day, and he keeps it in his *chah law*, a tea-cosy, a basket with a covered padded lid, and

## CALL FOR AND DELIVER

it will keep the tea hot for many hours. This *chah law* is the original thermos bottle.

Always on hand during the long day is hot tea to be sipped when the arms get tired and the back is weary.



All day long he irons, pausing for a bowl of rice with a bit of meat at noon and another bowl of rice at our dinnertime. Kwong's real meal of the day comes just before he goes to bed. It's *shew yeh*, the midnight supper.

The Chinese believe in eating heartily just before retiring—it induces sleep. And so when the last bundle is placed upon the shelves, and the last shirt ironed for



the day, then Kwong has his Chinese supper. These are often delicacies he has purchased in Chinatown: *ou shee*, black soy beans, *wun yee*, dried vegetable leaf, *hoy chit*, candied seaweed, perhaps a breast of duck soaked in honey, or some dried oysters, and soup. Nothing very elaborate, but simple, plain food. Something tasty to satisfy the palate, rice to fill up the hollow places, and soup last to wash it down.

Then perhaps he reads for a time *bo jee*, a Chinese newspaper, or turns again the well-thumbed leaves of *The Four Books*, or perhaps even he carves a bit on the statue he is making. He may, if his talents run in that direction, compose a poem for his own pleasure, or draw a picture to indulge his fancy. He works hard all day, but this hour or two before retiring at night he is enjoying himself to the full in his own Chinese way. He has learned the blessings of solitude and knows how to make the best of it. He has resources within himself and does not have to depend upon the noise and blare of the corner saloon for relaxation and excitement after a hard day's labor.

Of course companionship is at times desirable, and Kwong does take some time off occasionally to visit with his friends. This is over the week-end. When the last customer on Saturday night has called for his laundry, Kwong puts on his best suit of clothes, and is off to Chinatown to satisfy his Chinese soul with Chinese ways until Monday morning.

First of all he goes to the *jop for po*, the general merchandise store, and makes his purchases for the week: Chinese dried foods that came from China, and other necessities. And in a large paper bag they will be put

aside for him until he calls for them. On Sundays you will see in Chinese stores these paper bags—row after row of them—each with the owner's name. It's the same thing that the lumberman does in the West on his semi-annual visits to town; buys first of all what he needs, puts it aside, and then goes out for a rip-roaring good time until the last dollar is spent. But Kwong doesn't go blazing his way through Chinatown. His idea of a good time isn't one of "whooping it up."

His first visit on Sunday will be to his Kung Saw Fong, the family headquarters. And here Kwong meets his *hing dai*, or cousins, from other parts of the city. He'll spend the day hearing the latest gossip, exchanging bits of news, and perhaps take off his coat and sit up all night playing mahjong. Supper will be sent in from a nearby restaurant, and since Kwong's idea of a really good time is feasting with his friends and relatives, he'll eat until he is ready to burst. You'll see many waiters on Saturday night and all day on Sunday trotting along the streets with trays of steaming food on their heads, climbing the stairs to the Kung Saws or the apartments where the Chinese laundrymen are engaged in their quiet social activities.

So Kwong doesn't spend his week-end in riotous living. He is very saving of his hard-earned dollars. His ambition is to return some day to his native village in China, to the home of his ancestors, and spend his last days in peace and quiet. That's why he works so industriously, and the light in his laundry is often burning at midnight.

But should he die before the savings of a lifetime have made this possible, he is given a fitting funeral by

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

his Kung Saw. Through Chinatown the funeral procession winds its way, attended by the members of his family clan on foot in solemn procession, and then, after a last visit to his Kung Saw, he is laid to rest in the cemetery.

But not forever. Seven years later, in the spring of the year there is a *jup gum*, meaning the "picking of gold." At this time the bones of the dead are gathered up and taken to Chinatown. Here they are polished by professional bone polishers, who take care never to touch the bones but handle them carefully with two sticks. The bones are then encased in metal boxes, and sent back to China to the tomb of the ancestors. So at long last he goes home again, and his name is now entered upon the scrolls of his family tree.

Some day, when the war is over, Kwong will be going home. There'll be a ring of the doorbell at ten o'clock exactly, and another and younger "Kwong" will be standing there. He'll know all about us, too, and just how we want our laundry done. He'll even have the same little jokes, and always say with a smile, "*Ho,*" when I inquire about his good health.

And I'll know then that our Kwong has gone back to China. I like to think of our friend back home in his native village—no more shirts to iron during the long, hot summer days, no more trotting about the streets with a bag over his shoulders.

He has worked hard. He deserves the peace and quiet of his own courtyard as he sits smoking his water-pipe and watching the sparrows hop from the flowering tree to the red-tiled roof. Maybe he will sometimes remember the busy streets of our cities. But I don't begrudge

## CALL FOR AND DELIVER

him his hard-won savings. He deserves them. For he's been patient and humble and has minded his own business while here.

He has done even more than that. It was the Chinese laundrymen in this country some thirty or more years ago who were responsible for China today being a Republic. In New England we see in the village squares statues of the Minute Men of 1776 who were the backbone of the Revolutionary War that made this country a democracy.

There are no statues in the United States to the Chinese laundrymen. Yet they were the Minute Men of 1911 who financed the Chinese Revolution that overthrew the Manchus from the Dragon Throne and made China the Republic she is today. But that is a story in itself.

## AN EMPRESS IN A LAUNDRY

.....

THERE are three people concerned in this story: a Chinese doctor, an empress, and a janitor. And the story of these three people is the story of the Chinese Revolution of 1911.

The Chinese doctor is Sun Yat-sen, the first President of the Republic of China. The empress is the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi; according to some historians a wicked, cruel old hellion; and according to others the last great empress in the world and deserving of a niche in history alongside those other famous women rulers of destiny: Cleopatra, Catherine of Russia, Elizabeth and Victoria of England. The janitor is named Sue Shang-Hong.

Without one the story of the others would not be complete. But perhaps the vital link in the chain between Dr. Sun Yat-sen and the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi is the unknown janitor.

This is one of those "believe it or not" yarns. Some of it is history and some of it is legend. How much of it is truth and how much fiction, we can only surmise.

But we do know this. There was a revolution in China in 1911 that overthrew from the Dragon Throne

of China the Manchu Dynasty which had ruled China with an iron hand for 267 years and had caused untold suffering to millions of people.

We know, too, that at 12 Tyler Street in Boston, Massachusetts, stood a laundry in the basement of which the revolution was planned and plotted and it was here that the first real step toward the Revolution of 1911 was taken. Eight men were at this meeting; five of whom were humble laundrymen, two the owners of chop-suey restaurants, and the other an exiled doctor with a price upon his head.

But I heard one evening in a teahouse rumors to the effect that the man who really made this meeting possible was a janitor of the old Chinese Theater on Doyer Street in New York's Chinatown. That's what I heard. It was told to me as fact, but it sounds like fiction. It is one of the tales the old men tell.

Anyway, as the story goes, if it hadn't been for this janitor, Sue Shang-Hong, the Chinese Revolution might not have taken place when it did, and perhaps the present conflict between Japan and China might not have happened, either.

As I have said, it was only rumors that I heard in Chinatown. The whole story—history and legend, fact and fiction—was put together for me by my friend Ling Fai-Tsang. One winter evening we stood at a bar on Broadway having a glass of beer together. I had just made the comment that I was going to Boston for a few days on business.

"Drink tea in Boston," urged Ling, lifting his glass of beer. "We Chinese call Boston the 'City of Tea Drinking Revolutions.' "

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"Why?" I asked.

"In 1773 some Americans refused to drink tea temporarily—met in the back room of a printing shop on Franklin Avenue—and plotted the first big Boston Tea Party. In 1905 some Chinese drank much tea—met in a laundry on Tyler Street—and planned the Chinese Revolution. Result—today the Chinese no longer have pigtails. Result—today Chinese celebrate our Fourth of July on October 10th, which we have named, 'Double Ten Day.' "

I had heard rumors of this. I wanted to know more. So trying to be tactful I asked, "There are many monuments and statues in Boston to mark historic spots. Is there one at Tyler Street?"

"No," he answered. "No Chinese statues. It is too soon. Some of the men concerned are still living. And the Chinese Revolution is not yet over. Turmoil still in China. It is too soon to tell everything that happened in that Boston laundry. When all is written on the Scroll of a Thousand Years, maybe then the whole story can be told. Almost three hundred years the Chinese people planned and plotted. It started first in 1644, or maybe, even before that."

"I see," I said, but I didn't. "I thought you said it was in 1905. I must have gotten my dates wrong."

Ling glanced at his watch. "Almost midnight," he said. "And I see you are very curious still. I left home four hours ago to mail a letter. Must return soon. My wife will scold."

And he made his departure after extending an invitation to dine with him in Brooklyn the following week. "Then we shall talk more revolution," he said.

In the meantime, that I might understand more fully the events that led to the founding of the Chinese Republic, I rambled through the secondhand book stalls on Fourth Avenue, and managed to find three dusty books dealing with the Chinese Revolution. But the more I read, the more confusing the picture became. And I wondered if anybody, including the Chinese, fully understood the intricacies of Chinese politics.

I found mention on almost every page of the Chinese doctor, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the father of the Chinese Republic and the national hero of China. One book made the statement, "He was a man of quiet demeanor and he lived unostentatiously when in New York. Those who visited him there little dreamed that he was one of the master minds of a revolutionary movement of unprecedentedly colossal proportions."

Another read, "Sometime after the opening of the present century Sun Yat-sen organized a secret society, the purpose of which was to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty. For years this plot was hatching under cover in every Chinese settlement outside China in the world. It was timed to come to a head in 1912. Sun Yat-sen went chasing up and down the earth gathering recruits and—what was more important—money. America and Malaysia proved his richest fields for solicitation."

And yet another said, "No Chinese abroad deserved more credit for the revolution in China than the eighty thousand or so Chinese in the United States, because of their unstinted contributions of money. If this is a Cantonese-made rebellion and revolution, as some claim it is, then it is a monument to the laundrymen,



truck-growers, section-hands, miners, servants, and shopkeepers of the United States."

But no mention of Boston. And no mention of the year 1905. I would have to wait patiently until Ling was ready to explain.

Why he should lead me to a restaurant in Brooklyn to "talk more" was something I did not at the time understand. But the ways of the Chinese are roundabout and devious. The dinner, however, was a masterpiece; chicken with wine and oyster sauce, duck cooked in honey and cinnamon, beef with ginger, and other delicacies. When the serious ceremony of eating was complete and we were sipping our tea, only then did I feel free to question Ling about Sun Yat-sen and the secret society he had joined.

Ling shrugged his shoulders. "China has had many secret societies," he said. "They started in 1644. That was the year the Manchus came from North China. They conquered South China—China proper—and overthrew the great Ming Dynasty, which had ruled in China for many centuries. The Manchus made the Chinese shave their heads and wear pigtails. They were horsemen, you know, these Manchurians, and long-haired themselves. And how easy it was to capture a fleeing Chinese, grab him by his pigtail swinging out behind and neatly cut his head off. They made the women bind their feet, too. A woman with bound feet cannot flee—and could be easily captured by the Manchurian horsemen. Of course, all this made the Chinese very mad. Trouble started. And many secret societies were formed to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty. All during their rule they were kept busy spying on these

societies and suppressing them. There were many wars—many rebellions.”

“The most famous of which was the Taiping Rebellion from 1850 to 1864,” I said, trying to display my knowledge, which I had but recently read in books.

“Yes. And during that time more than thirty million Chinese were slaughtered. It was one of the world’s bloodiest revolutions. It might have succeeded but the Manchus hired a British army officer to put down the revolt.” Ling shook his head sadly, and made no further mention of “Chinese” Gordon, who was always happy to serve an Empire, be it British or Chinese.

Then he told me something I had heard rumors of before. The leaders of the revolt to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty were the men of Canton. And to escape the wrath of the Manchurians, many revolutionists fled the country. They came to America, political refugees—not unlike the refugees from Europe of the present day—and settled first in California.

Search if you will for Chinatowns in Berlin, Moscow, Paris, Madrid, Rome, and the capitals of Europe—save London, where the merchants because of trade with England made a settlement—and you will not find Chinatowns as we have them in America, from San Francisco to Boston. And the Chinese in this country are Cantonese.

So it is a mistaken notion to think that all the Chinese who started to come to this country beginning about 1850 were from the “coolie,” or laboring class. Among these “coolies” were many of the finest scholars and educated men of Canton—first-class revolutionists. True, these “coolies” served as cooks in the California

mining camps (not so many years ago members of the Russian nobility opened restaurants in this country). True, they helped build the Union Pacific Railroad. True, they opened up laundries. What would you do in a strange country, broke, and without a job?

Today, of course, a lecture tour is possible for an escaped political refugee. But not in 1850! And being Chinese these revolutionary exiles from their native land hid their light under a bushel and with true Chinese modesty—or was it fear of the long arm of revenge from the powerful Manchus?—pretended to know nothing, see nothing, and said less. To live quietly and peacefully, to find any sort of employment so they might go on living, was all they asked. In most instances penniless—for escaping with your head on your shoulders is quite enough of an escape without bringing along all your household goods and gods. Those can come later. And so could ultimate victory for a cause temporarily defeated.

Today among the grandchildren of these political refugees, who were lucky enough to escape with their lives, are some of the leading Chinese residents of this country: merchants, professional men, and college boys and girls. And being born here, they are American citizens all.

Is it any wonder that with that background—and the problem not wholly settled yet—the coming of the Chinese to this country, even today, remains shrouded in mystery? Some day, when the trouble in China is finally settled, the whole truth of the matter may be told. But the time is not yet ripe. In the meantime, now and then old men in Chinatown tell tales of those early

days and the fantastic escapes of their fathers and grandfathers from the bloodshed of the Taiping Rebellion.

This Taiping Rebellion, even though suppressed, almost dealt a death-blow to the Manchus. And their dynasty might have tottered if a brilliant concubine to the Emperor hadn't seized the throne, and become by intrigue and a succession of murders, the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi. She was an amazing woman and held the Manchus together for almost half a century. But she, too, had many secret societies against her. Now and then in histories we find mention of them. Some of them were "The Plum Blossom Fists," "The White Lily Sect," "The Harmonious Fists," and "The Red Lamp Light." And when they combined to overthrow her, she very cleverly turned them against the foreigners in China, and again saved her dynasty and her throne.

This was the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. In China the Boxers were known as "The Society of Righteous Fists." But the Empress Dowager made one great mistake. In 1894 she left the barn door unlocked and a humble Chinese doctor escaped. To the Western world he is known as Dr. Sun Yat-sen. But that, as Ling informed me, isn't his real name. To the Chinese he is known as Sun Wen—or Sun Chung-san. In 1894 he took the name of Sun Yat-sen when he joined a secret society in China.

"Which one?" I asked. "'The White Lily Sect' or 'The Plum Blossom Fists?' Both sound swell."

"I don't know for certain," said Ling. "Maybe one of those, maybe another one, maybe one whose name has not yet been told. Of the original founders of this

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

society seventeen were caught and beheaded. Dr. Sun alone escaped. He fled in disguise to Japan. Here he cut off his pigtail. 'No more shall I wear the Manchu badge of subjection,' he said. He was the first Chinese to do this. Very brave man. The next fifteen years he went about the world in many disguises. Even to this day not all of them are known."

"How exciting!"

Ling shook his head. "Exciting, yes—but great necessity. The Manchus set a big price on his head. Reward of \$500,000 for Sun Wen—'Dead or Alive'—as your G-men put it."

For seventeen years—from 1895 to 1912—he was an exile and a fugitive. The disguises he assumed, the hairbreadth escapes he had, is a more amazing story than any Edgar Wallace-Phillips Oppenheim-Sax Rohmer yarn. No fiction writer would dare have his hero do the things Dr. Sun did. It's unbelievable to think of the future First President of China, fleeing from country to country, pursued by the Manchus, adopting one disguise after another, always one step ahead of his enemies.

The story of the life of George Washington is dull and prosaic in comparison. Washington behaved properly, with dignity, as the leader of a revolution should. But Dr. Sun put into effect all the unbelievable tricks of mystery yarns. Yet he survived, that's the amazing part of it.

"For a long time," Ling went on, "he was alone against the world."

"But why? I thought the Chinese wanted the Manchus overthrown."

"Oh, yes. Correct. Quite. Overthrow the Manchus. Then what? Then put back upon the Dragon Throne a Son of Heaven from Southern China. Replace a bad dynasty with a good dynasty. But Dr. Sun had a different idea. He wanted a Republic, not another emperor. He wanted a government of the people. But wherever he went and told his ideas, the Chinese laughed. Restore the Ming Dynasty, the Sung Dynasty, the Chou Dynasty—any of the former great dynasties—but a Republic?—No! So for many years the only man who thought a Republic good for China was Dr. Sun."

"No supporters at all?" I asked.

"Remember that the seventeen others who thought as he did had been beheaded. So under his hat, and his alone, existed the dream of a Republic for China. So he put on another disguise and tried again. . . . We have talked long enough here," said Ling suddenly. "Let us go someplace else and continue."

Was Sue Shang-Hong and what happened in Boston in 1905 to remain unexplained? But we complimented the cook for a delicious and satisfying dinner, which was a courteous thing to do and pleased him immensely, and left the restaurant.

On the subway back Ling shouted in my ear above the pounding noises, "If it hadn't been for the American-Chinese Dr. Sun never would have succeeded."

"Is that a secret?" I yelled back.

"Not when I talk as loud as this," and his eyes twinkled and a smile spread over his round jovial face.

We went to Chinatown. Seated at a table with a red cloth in an Italian bar on Mott Street with a glass of

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

beer in front of him, Ling was ready to resume his story.

"The first ice was broken for Dr. Sun in San Francisco," he said. "Here a powerful leader of the Gee Kung Tong, or Chinese Freemasons, had a talk with this pigtailless Chinese doctor."

"Another secret society?"

"Oh, yes. The Gee Kung was founded in the late seventeenth century, maybe its roots go further back than that. Its purpose, too, was the overthrow of the Manchus. So since Dr. Sun wanted the same thing, he was invited to join."

"He must have joined several secret societies," I said.

"Enough so that if he had insignias for all on his chest he would have looked like an honorary Boy Scout," laughed Ling. "The Gee Kung gave him its protection and sent him to Chicago. But the Chinese in Chicago weren't interested as yet in a Republic. The idea was too revolutionary even for revolutionists. So he came to New York. The same thing was true here. In those days the monarchists were strong in this city. The elders of Chinatown on Mott and Pell streets wanted a Son of Heaven on the Dragon Throne, an emperor in a silk robe, not a president in a frock coat and high hat."

"Did Dr. Sun fail in New York, too?" I asked.

"Yes. In all the city he found only one friend, only one man who would listen to him. This was an old actor—once a great star—now janitor of the Chinese Theater on Doyer Street. He was named Sue Shang-Hong. How he first met Dr. Sun was one of my father's favorite tales."

## AN EMPRESS IN A LAUNDRY

From the story Ling told me one can almost reconstruct the scene. Sue Shang-Hong was now past seventy. But he could still remember the days when he had been applauded as he stamped and stormed about the stage, wearing magnificent robes and gorgeous headdress, and swung a sword and in the best tradition of the Chinese theater galloped about the stage on an imaginary horse. Now he was an old man, and no longer wore the red and green embroidered robes.

Every night after the performance he would make his janitor's rounds, seeing that the lights were all put out and the doors locked before he retired to his tiny room at the back. It was long after midnight one evening. The cymbals were silent, and the drums were covered. As Sue Shang-Hong turned from the stage to the auditorium he saw a man sitting there, quiet and alone. He was a man with a haircut like the American guides who often brought parties of tourists to the theater. He was Chinese—yet he had no pigtail.

"Who are you?" asked Sue Shang-Hong.

"A traveler in a strange land."

"Where are you from?"

"Our mother China."

"Where are you going?"

"I do not know."

"What are you doing here?"

"I have no place to go. No place to lay my head. I am alone, and at last defeated!"

More questions followed, and this stranger told Sue Shang-Hong his story. He told him, too, of his dreams of a Republic for China.

Sue Shang-Hong only shrugged his shoulders.



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

"I have seen seventy winters and seventy summers," he said. "What may be is no longer of consequence to me. But you are at last friendless in this world as I am. If it gives you any comfort you may share my humble lodgings and my bowl of rice."

And so Dr. Sun lived with this old actor in the back room of the Chinese Theater. And Sue Shang-Hong shared with him his bowl of *congee*—a frugal dish—soft-boiled rice soup.

"And that," continued Ling, "is the story as my father has told it to me." Then he added soberly, "In life a man needs only one good friend. All other people are like the grass that grows on the top of a mountain, bending and swaying in every direction the wind blows."

This old Chinese Theater is still standing, incidentally. It is now the Rescue Mission of the late Tom Noonan, visited by uptown sightseers and hungry drifters from the Bowery, lonely old men as once Sun Yat-sen was lonely.

"So all during the summer of 1904 while in New York Dr. Sun lived at this old Chinese Theater. When I was a small boy my father would take me walking on Pell Street. There on the corner of Doyer and Pell was an old building, now torn down, with some stone steps in front. Here every day a man with threadbare clothes sat meditating. Everybody accused him of wearing the stone smooth—and he did. My father would point him out to me and say, 'See that comical fellow. He dreams away his time—chasing phantoms. He has ideas too big for one small head. He is Sun Dai-Pow.'"

"I thought the Chinese called him Sun Wen," I said.

"Sun Dai-Pow was the nickname people gave him. It means, 'Sun, the Distorter of Truth.' Nobody believed him. Nobody would listen. Nobody but he thought a Republic would be good for China. Maybe he would be sitting there today, and the Chinese Republic but the vague dream of an old man, if his only friend, Sue Shang-Hong hadn't, by doing extra work in a Bowery saloon, made enough money to send him on to Boston. He had failed in New York. But Sue Shang-Hong had a cousin in Boston, who he thought might listen. So to Boston, with the money Sue Shang-Hong gave him, went Dr. Sun."

"But there's one thing I can't understand," I said. "If there was a price on his head—and everyone knew who he was—why wasn't he captured as he sat on the stone steps on Doyer and Pell streets?"

Ling shook his head sadly. "I see you do not yet understand Chinese diplomacy," he said.

And when I agreed with that statement, he added, "Perhaps there are several reasons. One—he had no influence—no friends—he was considered only a harmless dreamer, a comical fellow. No longer a dangerous man, so why bother with him? Or perhaps the powerful monarchists were merely allowing him to live so they could see how far he would go. It is sometimes better to let a plot grow and thrive before silencing it, for then one knows what it is all about. Perhaps the monarchist party was glad to see someone plotting against the Manchus. Perhaps they might not have been monarchists at all. Who knows?"

Ling continued with his story. "So in the middle of January in 1905 Dr. Sun went to Boston. Through con-

nections Sue Shang-Hong made he lived in the basement of a laundry there, sleeping under the ironing board at night. He spoke with the cousins of Sue Shang-Hong long and earnestly. He read many books on the principles of democracy. He'd talk to anyone who would listen to him. He'd thrust his hands into his pockets and speak for hours without making a gesture. Finally he gathered about him seven Chinese who believed as he did. These men, living here in this country, had seen for themselves the advantages of a Republic for China. Night after night they met in the basement of this laundry at 12 Tyler Street and talked and talked."

"And drank quarts of tea, I suppose."

"Yes. Just like Boston. A big tea party this. And drinking tea, Dr. Sun and these seven men planned what are today the three great principles on which the Chinese Republic is founded: 'Country—people—party.' This was their platform. The party was called the Kuomintang. A people's country—that's what the Chinese consider a Republic."

These three principles stated briefly are: first, the principle of nationality, which includes not only complete independence of China but racial equality for all peoples within her borders; second, the principle of the rights of the people, embracing all requirements for a self-governing democracy; and third, the principle of people's living, including the equalization of land ownership and the regulation of capitalism in industry.

"These seven men agreed on these principles," went on Ling. "It was the beginning of Dr. Sun's success. Without them he would have failed again—and failed

completely. But money was needed to finance the new party. Funds were necessary for a revolution."

I asked Ling how Dr. Sun managed this, and he told me that these seven men—five laundrymen and two restaurant owners—helped him. They gave from their meager earnings. One laundryman was saving to send his son to college. Another, who had a small restaurant, made similar sacrifices. These seven men told seven friends, and seven friends told seven more friends—sort of a chain-letter effect.

And soon Dr. Sun had enough money to go back to China—again in disguise. Here he told the Chinese secret societies that the Chinese in America thought a Chinese Republic good for China. It had been good for America—as those living here would testify. And the American-Chinese were willing to support a Republic. That's what he told the Chinese in China. Then he came back to this country in 1907 and told the Chinese here that the Chinese in China thought a Republic was the answer. Suddenly everybody seemed in agreement. Dr. Sun went about the country talking. Since the Chinese in China had approved Dr. Sun's ideas, money began to pour in. Often laundrymen gave their entire savings to him. So he went on spreading word of the coming revolution—sometimes in California—sometimes in New York where he lived this time at 10 Pell Street and also at the Chinese Baptist Church on West 31st Street with his friend, Dr. Hui. Meanwhile in 1908 the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi died a natural death, and the Manchus got worse instead of better. And the Chinese people began to think that

something should be done—and done quickly. So the revolution was planned for 1912.

"But it actually occurred on October 10, 1911, didn't it?" I asked Ling.

"Yes. It exploded prematurely on the evening of October 9th in Hankow. The next day, since it was now no longer a secret, it exploded in other cities, and so October 10th has become the Chinese Independence Day. Dr. Sun wasn't even in China at the time. But a telegram was sent him in November asking him to be the President of the new Republic. So he went back to China, and the 'comical fellow' who slept in the back room of the Chinese Theater on Doyer Street and under an ironing board in Boston became the first President of the Republic of China. The rest is all told in history books. And every Monday in every Chinese school the students rise and recite the three principles of good government Dr. Sun expounded in Boston."

"One might almost say it was because the Chinese here in this country saw how a democracy works to everybody's advantage that China became a Republic, and they gave their support," I suggested.

"Quite true," responded Ling. "We have learned the principles of democracy from you."

"But what of these seven men who first helped him to success?" I asked. "And what of Sue Shang-Hong?"

"He has passed away. And of the others four have gone to join their ancestors," replied Ling. "Three are still living, two in China. One is a retired judge in Canton; the other a retired district attorney in a province in Southern China."

"And the third?"

## AN EMPRESS IN A LAUNDRY

Ling, with the air of an arch-conspirator, leaned over the table, and whispered, "He is the cook in the restaurant in Brooklyn where we had dinner tonight."

"And you didn't tell me!"

"He is a very modest man. He prefers to live in obscurity. He is happy. Only a truly great man practices the virtues of humility. The cause he served—the Chinese Republic—is greater than any personal ambitions. He is quite content to remain in the background. And let us respect him for it."

## THE PITH OF THE BAMBOO

.....

IT HAS been several years now since I first met the Chinese. And looking back over the years I realize what a glorious adventure it has been. And how glad I am that I made the deliberate attempt to know and become acquainted with my Chinese friends. I had to step down from my complacent, smug pedestal and get rid of many of my American and Middle Western prejudices, and I had to learn to keep at all times an open mind. But I have been amply rewarded.

I think, for one thing, I have learned tolerance, and have come to the realization that the other fellow's viewpoint—be it ever so different from my own—still contains a treasure or two. I have learned that all my habits of thought and habits of action can be enriched through an understanding of this other viewpoint. I have found that in every new adventure, if approached in the spirit of joyous living, somewhere is something new we may learn and cherish.

When I now go to Chinatown it is in quite a different frame of mind. I have no fear of secret passages, nor of closed doors. Those existed only in my own mind—and the closed door of my own prejudices. There

## THE PITH OF THE BAMBOO

is nothing in Chinatown to fear. The dragon is a friendly, kindly animal, but you have to awaken him from his slumber. And when you do he'll be a playful companion, and the enjoyment of living needs no explanation.

Now as I walk about the streets I think of the peace and quiet that is Chinatown. I see Ah-Pau sitting all day long in her home, surrounded by babies, and bossing all Chinatown. I peek through the open doors of the restaurants and see the elders quietly sipping tea and telling stories of old China. I smell the fragrant odors from the kitchen and wonder what new steaming dish I shall have for dinner tonight. I look into the windows of the stores at the curios. There in a row are the statues of the Ten Immortals, and I want to know more about them. I see the youngsters playing their quiet games in the streets, and I wonder what part they are to play in this new democracy of ours.

I want to know more. I really know so little about the Chinese. How can I, with an acquaintance of only a few brief years, come to a complete understanding of a culture so intricate and so old? But I can only try in my feeble way to interpret my friends as I see them.

There is no "good-by" in Chinese. They say on parting, "*Joy gin*," which means, "Until our next meeting."

So I shall go on learning from my Chinese friends and delve deeper, as time goes on, into their serene, joyful philosophy, and more adventures in graceful living will be mine. And I do know that I want to share what I have found with my American friends. For perhaps if they are willing to go and shake hands with the dragon, they may discover some answer to their own



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

perplexing problems, and the burden of their troubles may be made a little lighter.

I do feel that there is much we can learn from the Chinese, for in their joyousness and their calm acceptance of the ways of nature and of life is a rich gift to humanity. And it is there in Chinatown waiting for us. We have only to ask and it shall be given.

One of my choicest treasures is a rare old Chinese drum. It is almost a symbol of my happy hours in Chinatown. It was given me through my good friend, Jung. "This is an old drum," he said, "getting rather worn out. It belonged to the tong, but they are getting a new one. And this one—if we kept it home, the children might break it. And so we feel it would be wise to let you keep it for us. It has been used for many years now in the dragon dances. So you take it home. Give it a whack now and then—for that's what it's for—and maybe now and then you can wake up the dragon in your part of town."

And I do on those occasions when the dragon of worry, fear, perplexity, and what not comes sitting on my doorstep. I take out the drum and give it a merry tune of *ti-tum, ti-tum, ti-tum-tum-tum*. It helps me a lot in laughing at those everyday dragons. And I am grateful to my Chinese friends.

It has been some years now since I was leader of the Chinese Athletic Club. But one evening, not so long ago, I went back again to the Church of All Nations for a basketball game. The little fellows that used to come on Saturday afternoon were there. Quan-Ling, who wanted a football for the baby—now grown up and a young man—was playing on one of the teams that

## THE PITH OF THE BAMBOO

night. So were Georgie Ong and Leonard, and Ling-Yung, and all the others. Most of them are in college, young Chinese-Americans now in their twenties. On the sidelines cheering were the older youths, the ones now married with sons of their own, like Eddie Wu, who listened so patiently to me that first evening.

Some of them had their young sons along, tiny tots of four and five—a new generation that one day will be grown up and playing basketball, too.

If you have never seen the Chinese play basketball, I heartily urge you to go next time you have the opportunity. I've never seen players so swift, so surprising, and so unpredictable. A player receives the ball. His opponent stands guard. With eyes turned toward a team mate, the player makes as if to throw the ball. But suddenly it goes in the opposite direction—and there stands a player ready to receive it. And when you match that surprise against a team that is prepared for the unexpected, you have a game that is breathless to watch.

And yet Eddie Wu shook his head sadly and murmured, "They don't play like we used to."

"You're just getting old," I said.

He laughed.

"The good old days sometimes do seem the best, and the younger generation always a little different. Maybe they're better than we were. Look at that play! Yes, I think they are! I don't think I'm the one to talk. When I was their age I objected to being called *jook sing*. Maybe I didn't know what it's all about. Maybe I don't now. But I had high hopes once, too. So do these young fellows, I suppose. Maybe I'm still a *jook sing*."

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

*Jook sing*—that's what the elders in Chinatown call the young men. It means "Pith of the Bamboo." And as we all know, the pith of the bamboo is nonexistent and useless. As the elders grow old, they turn more and more to China. They remember all too well the old days here in America when the Chinese were so misunderstood and the target of abuses.

They see the young men becoming more and more Americanized. Some of them are dubious about the ultimate outcome. They think old China ways are best—and the old customs must be adhered to. These conservative, orthodox elders are called by the young men, *jook kok*. This is the joint of the bamboo, that hard, unyielding part, that also is useless. And so the battle between the old and the new, the generation that looks into the past and the new generation that gazes into the future, goes on in Chinatown as elsewhere.

But these young Chinese-Americans today have a different outlook from their grandparents and great-grandparents who fled from Canton to this country before the turn of the century. They were born in this country. They are entitled to all the privileges of an American citizen. They have seen democracy in practice in a republic as did Dr. Sun Yat-sen.

The old Chinese of ninety years ago didn't want so much to be a part of American life. They withdrew into themselves, and shut their doors upon our ways and customs, and continued to live as their ancestors had lived in China.

But today, these young men and women of Chinese descent are looking forward with a new vision into the future. What to do, is their problem. To return

## THE PITH OF THE BAMBOO

to China or to remain here in the United States, retaining all respect for the old ways, yet also combining in their lives something of the new?

And the question they so often ask is, "What employment outside of restaurants and laundries is open to us? What chances have we in a democracy?"

They graduate from our public schools; receive degrees from our colleges and universities. They have learned American ways and customs. And they are just as American as any of the other "foreigners" who have made this their home. But they have found door after door in our American businesses closed to them. The age-old prejudice exists, and "how can it be overcome?" they often ask.

So few, so very few can find gainful employment outside of restaurants and with Chinese importing firms. They walk away from our colleges and universities, ranking high in scholarship and deportment, a diploma in their hands, hoping somewhere to put to good use the knowledge they have acquired. But the average American employer has never hired a Chinese. And so the Chinese graduate returns to Chinatown and becomes a waiter.

He'll even speak pidgin English to his customers, too. I know of one with a Ph.D. degree who, bland and smiling, waits upon the diners in a Chinese restaurant. One night a visitor said, "Flied licee tonight? Likee?"

"Likee welly muchy," replied the Doctor of Philosophy. And then, judging from the visitor's appearance his nationality, began to speak to him in his own "foreign" tongue.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

If I were an American employer, I think somewhere on my staff I would have a Chinese youth. If for no other reason than the new slant I would get on my business. But I also know I'd find more joy and more good humor about my shop or my factory than I dreamed could exist there.

Imagine a Chinese receptionist in the office of an executive. How calm, how poised, how equal to any emergency. How swiftly he would get rid of the obnoxious visitor. How sweetly and soothingly he would calm down those waiting impatiently in the outside office. How honest and faithful he would be, too. And the new ideas he might have.

Up in New England there's a Chinese boy who, when he steps out of college, should be grabbed quick by an eager employer. One summer he went to a Boy Scout camp. This camp had an American youth who was always running away. He was a problem to the scout master. But the American boy took a great liking to the Chinese lad.

And finally, in despair, after having to search the woods late one night to find the runaway American, the scout master said to the Chinese, "He likes you. If you can keep him within sight until his week is out, I'll give you a quarter."

"Okay," said the Chinese boy.

The next day there was no running away. It was all too simple. The scout master saw the American boy tied on a rope to the Chinese boy. They were running happily about the grounds and having a grand time playing together.

## THE PITH OF THE BAMBOO

But that evening, the scout master said to the Chinese boy, "I don't think you should have tied him up."

"I didn't," answered the unperturbed descendant of



the realm of Confucius. "He thought we were playing horse."

When he grows up, that youth will know all the answers.

But the youths of Chinatown do not despair. Nor do they complain. Even though they have to go back to

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

the flatiron and the tray, they are patient and keep on smiling.

Out in San Francisco they publish a magazine, with articles about old China and new America side by side. They have one in New York, too.

And in 1938 they organized the Chinese Inter-Club Committee. For like our youths of other groups, they, too, have their clubs: athletic clubs, dramatic clubs, camera clubs, art clubs, social clubs, and so forth. And for a better understanding, not only of each other but of other groups, they brought all these various clubs together.

The preamble to their constitution and by-laws reads as follows:

"Whereas recent developments in humanity's struggle to achieve a better world, and the immediate threats to civilization everywhere, particularly in China, have brought to our attention with increasing intensity the need for Chinese young people in China and in America to accept the tremendous responsibilities of leadership and citizenship in the world community and in our personal relationships among ourselves and with those peoples of other racial heritages and national traditions:

"Whereas in seeking to understand and meet the social, economic, vocational, cultural and personal difficulties which confront overseas Chinese, the young people of New York have decided to join together in an attempt to find a solution to these their common problems."

They have meetings, discussion groups, study clubs with speakers to acquaint them with the problems of

youth in a new world in the making. While in the old days Chinese clubs were secret organizations—such as the tongs, for example—there is nothing secret about these young people and their social and cultural clubs. They even say that in time the tongs will vanish. For the younger generation looks upon them with great disapproval, partly because of the disgrace and misunderstandings they have brought upon the Chinese. They are eager to do things in the American way. They are trying to understand America, and they are hoping that America will try to understand them.

“We want to stay here in America,” they say. “We want this to be our home. We were born here. We live here. We want to be a part of this democracy. We only want a chance, the same chance for progress and happiness and tolerance given to the Puritan Fathers and all other seekers of freedom who have come to these shores, America.”

Or as Eddie Wu phrased it one evening, “We Chinese wish very much to be accepted by our foreign brothers and are careful to see that our actions will not be offensive to others. Of course, this is bound up with the idea of ‘face-saving’ too; for each one of us must bear the responsibility of upholding the honor and dignity of our people and must not act in a manner that may bring disgrace to the rest of us. However, if, in our conformity to the teachings of Confucius, we are not acceptable, we shrug our shoulders, and say, ‘The way of the West is strange, indeed.’ ”

Often I go about town with some of my Chinese friends. They are curious about dining in foreign restaurants. And we’ve tried them all: Spanish, Armenian,



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

Swedish, Russian, Greek. Their curiosity knows no limits.

At a Swedish restaurant one of them said, "Does eating this sort of food make Greta Garbo what she is?"

Then we went into a discussion of Chinese food.

One day we were having luncheon at a Spanish restaurant. We had a typical Spanish lunch: Spanish rice, a chop, and topped it off with guava jelly and cheese.

My friend looked about the restaurant. It was crowded with Spanish people.

"You know," he said, smiling, "it has never occurred to me before. But don't the Spaniards all look alike!"

Yes, we tried all sorts of different restaurants.

"Soon," it was said, "we shall become truly internationally minded. You eat the food—you learn to like the people! I've had so many different kinds of foreign foods, I'm beginning to feel exactly like chop suey!"

And so they go, wide-awake and eager to know and understand all peoples, for in knowing and understanding others, they feel they will come to an understanding of themselves.

The Chinese-American youth of today is not like his elder. He is going out to meet the dragon. He will not withdraw unto himself and close the doors behind him, unless we, because of our lack of tolerance, force him into this unwelcome path. He is trying to learn from us. We can go halfway, at least, and learn from him.

"What is democracy?" You may ask that puzzling question of a Chinese student. And he'll probably smile and reply, "As Confucius says, 'Men are born pretty much alike, but through their habits they gradually

## THE PITH OF THE BAMBOO

grow further and further apart from each other.' And maybe it is true that 'all men are brothers.'"

They are eager for the new. They do not, however, throw overboard the old. As one youth said to me, "I know the customs. I know how to greet my elders and show them respect. My father taught me good manners, and I try to be polite. I know the old ways and love them. I like to go riding on the roller coaster, too."

On that October day in 1940 when the young men of the country—Americans all, immigrants all—citizens of this democracy, were called upon to register for the peacetime army of the Selective Service Act, the youth of Chinatown responded as did all the youth of the nation. The registration boards were ready at six o'clock in the morning to receive these young men. But the board at the public school in New York's Chinatown met with a surprise. Six o'clock—on the dot—the hour set—and there lined up four deep for over a block long, waiting and ready, stood over one thousand young Chinese-Americans.

The registration board at this school hadn't anticipated that many. They didn't know there were that many possible registrants in Chinatown. They had come from all parts of the city to stand together. Young China responding in a body to the call of their country—and ready and willing to do their part.

The draft board was frantic. A hurried call for help was sent to headquarters, and two bus loads of twenty-eight Chinese interpreters and some thirty reserve registrars were rushed to the scene to smooth out the unexpected situation.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

For all of them to appear at one place and at one time—how like the Chinese!

I asked Eddie Wu why they had all come to Chinatown from all parts of the city, instead of going to the registration boards nearest to their place of business.

"Why not come to Chinatown?" he replied. "The family Kung Saw is there. That is their legal address. The quickest way to reach a Chinese living in another part of the city is through his family headquarters. So why not Chinatown?"

Then he smiled and added, "It's a secret. But we wanted everybody to know that we Chinese are ready to do our part. We are American citizens—we vote here—we live here. This is a democracy, and we *jook sings* want to prove, not only to our elders but also to the American people, that we want to do our share in making democracy work."

## MR. WU ASCENDS THE DRAGON

.....

ONE winter I was away on one of my periodic pilgrimages directing a community theater. I took along with me some Chinese tea, a bottle of *Mui Kwe Lu*, a box of lichee nuts, and a few Chinese curios of one sort or another with which to invoke, on rainy days, a nice sense of nostalgia. I had hoped there might be a Chinese restaurant in the Southern city where I was going. But there wasn't.

However, I settled in and hoped for a pleasant winter. There were three Chinese laundrymen in town. I made the acquaintance of one, tried my Chinese on him, and had to start learning the language all over again. He did, however, give me a new phrase, "*hong git*," meaning "plenty hot."

And he was always amused when I would say to him on those delightful Southern days when the thermometer hovered around ninety in the shade and never once abated, "Hong gitter than all hell."

Then one day his laundry was closed, and I was told he was ill in a hospital at the edge of town. I went to see him.

The nurse told me they did not expect him to live

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

long. She said he was a wonderful patient, never complained, always smiled and thanked them for every service they did.

The hospital was on a hill and I found my friend with a room on an open porch overlooking the valley below. He was lying in his bed quietly waiting for the end to come as he knew it would. He smiled brightly when I came in and was vastly amused at my attempts to carry on a conversation in Chinese. When I expressed myself in English he would give me the Chinese words for my thoughts. And so, stumbling along, we had a good time.

I asked him if there was anything I could do for him, and he shook his head.

With a gesture toward the trees, the flowers, and the distant hills against the blue sky overhead, he said, happily, "I have everything I want now."

Forgotten were the long hours over his ironing board, the hot nights, the piles of dirty linen, the burning summers, and the cold winters. He could spend his entire day wistfully watching stray clouds float lazily in the sky, the trees bending and whispering in the breeze, and the flowers that bloomed outside his porch. He had everything he wanted—the far distant horizon, and all that lay beyond it. The whole world lay slumbering peacefully at his feet at last. What dreams he had of other days and far-off China, I do not know. There were no regrets. Only contentment—and the attendants at the hospital were kind to him. There was truly nothing more he desired.

And so I left him. He was happy being alone, look-

## MR. WU ASCENDS THE DRAGON

ing at the clouds behind the trees by day, and the stars at night for company.

Not long after on a busy day the telephone rang. It was the nurse at the hospital. She told me my Chinese friend had passed away during the night. But the day before he had asked her to deliver a message.

"Tell my friend who came to see me that soon I shall ascend the dragon."

Often during the days that followed I thought of him. Late that spring I returned home again to New York and was busy as usual with the thousand and one details that claimed my attention. Then one evening the telephone rang and a friend of Eddie Wu's told me he had been asked to phone me. Mr. Wu, too, had ascended the dragon. And Eddie had asked if I wouldn't come and pay my respects to his father.

I went to Chinatown. Mr. Wu was lying at the funeral parlors. All night long Eddie and his brothers would remain with him.

He slumbered serene and calm, a quiet smile on his placid features. His pale thin hands were crossed over his chest. He was clad in a Chinese gown, with new slippers on his feet. At one side was his picture, surrounded by the floral tributes sent him by his friends and the various associations of which he had been a member. Long streamers of white silk were attached to these tributes, and on them were written in Chinese, poems and messages from those who loved and respected him.

Before him was a bowl filled with burning joss sticks. Whenever they burned low, Eddie would take a fresh handful, light them, bow nine times to his father—the

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

greatest respect a son can pay his elder—and place the joss sticks in the bronze bowl. All night long these would be kept burning.

Eddie, with a smile and a friendly pat on the back, led me to meet his father. I paid my respects by bowing. With each friend that appeared, Eddie would go forward. They would bow, stand for a moment, and then turn away.

Outside I was given a piece of candy and a nickel wrapped in white paper. "It is from my father," said Eddie. "You must eat the candy, and with the nickel buy some more sweets on your way home."

Again the bitter and the sweet, the Yang and the Yin, the two meeting in a perfect whole.

"He often spoke of you," said Eddie. "And was sorry you were away this winter. But he sent you his good wishes. I know he is glad that you came to see him again."

The services were at noon the next day. I was on hand. One of Eddie's friends told me that just before Mr. Wu ascended the dragon he had, at long last, joined a church. "He wanted his American friends to know that he was one with them in everything, and that he, too, could be a Christian. He felt they would be pleased to know he was having an American as well as a Chinese funeral."

There was a brief service, and then Mr. Wu started on his last journey. Friends, wearing white gloves, as did all the mourners, carried him through the streets. First came an Italian band from the neighborhood playing badly out of tune, "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Then came the picture of Mr. Wu, the floral tributes,

and the casket. Following the casket came Eddie on foot, carrying in his hand a long, thick stick of incense. From now on, and until he would return home alone, this would never leave his hand.

I could almost fancy Mr. Wu explaining this to me. "It is fitting that the eldest son should burn some joss. Let it glow brightly, for it is like life, which he now holds in his hands, burning slowly out at last, but ever bright while the fire remains."

Following Eddie were the members of the family. Then came all Mr. Wu's friends in solemn procession. The procession was three blocks long, for Mr. Wu had led an honorable life, and great respect was due him. At the rear in a bus came a Chinese orchestra, playing at full tilt. The two bands answered each other back and forth. It was loud and noisy. But Mr. Wu had wanted it like that. I could almost imagine a quiet, roguish smile on his face. He was a Chinese-American—and he had music of both nations to see him on his way.

Through Chinatown the cortege wound, through all the familiar streets Mr. Wu had once walked. He wasn't really gone. He was merely taking another walk along the streets he knew, and to the places he loved.

At the door of the building where he lived the procession halted. Mr. Wu was carried into the hallway, then out again. It was a visit to his home. Another stop was made at the Kung Saw. It was his farewell visit to his family headquarters.

At the cemetery the lilacs were in full bloom. Here the choir of the church he had joined read the services and sang a hymn. Then one of the elders of the Wu



## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

Kung Saw stepped forward and in Chinese read the story of the life of Mr. Wu. He told of his fortitude, the strength and beauty of his character, and how honored he was among his fellow men.

Eddie and his younger brothers again made their bow of obeisance to their father. His friends did likewise. It was the final token of respect we could pay to the gentle, kindly Mr. Wu, who had at last ascended the dragon, and was at peace.

At the conclusion of the simple ceremony, all wearing white gloves stripped them from their hands, and left them lying on the ground. It was over. From now on there would be no more signs of mourning.

Back again in Chinatown we were all invited to a banquet. Eddie was present, as was everyone who had attended. Mr. Wu had selected the menu himself several weeks ago. This was his banquet, his way of showing gratitude to us for having honored him by going with him on his last journey.

"My father wants you all to have a good time," said Eddie, going from table to table. "Are you enjoying yourselves? My father is very happy."

Not once during the banquet, which lasted a long time, did anyone refer to Mr. Wu in the past tense. Nor has Eddie ever done so. He never says, "My father was," but always, "My father is."

I have never extended condolences to Eddie. I have merely accepted, as he does, that his father is here with us, happy in the thought that life goes on and we are trying to be contented in the midst of a blustering world. For Eddie truly feels that his father is alive. Isn't all nature alive?

## MR. WU ASCENDS THE DRAGON

For seven days and seven nights afterwards, Eddie told me later, he kept all the lights in the house burning. This was to show his father the way back home and that they were expecting him to return. "On the seventh night," said Eddie, "I was lying asleep. Suddenly I woke up. There at the foot of the bed stood my father. He smiled at me, and told me not to fret. Then he pointed to the chandelier. There hung a basket, and in it was a young baby. I knew then my father had been reborn. So I got up and turned off the lights, and went back to sleep."

On a mantel in Eddie's home may be seen a picture of Mr. Wu. Before it stands a bowl with joss sticks. On his father's birthday these sticks are lighted, and oranges placed there for him, too. There's a bowl of rice, and a cup of tea, also.

"I want my father to know I am still doing things for him," said Eddie.

Once a year Eddie goes to his father's final resting place, as do other Chinese whose parents and family have passed away. They take with them joss sticks which they burn, red paper money for their parents, paper clothes, and other necessary things for those who have journeyed into the eternal land of the dragon. And being practical they take also a freshly roasted duck or chicken, neatly wrapped in oiled paper. This is left at the grave.

No sooner have the Chinese gone, than poor people living in the neighborhood, who know the day and have been waiting, rush forward and get the roast fowls. The Chinese know that they will do this. That is why they are careful to wrap them so neatly in oiled paper.

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

And that evening in Chinatown there is a banquet. Again Mr. Wu comes and joins his family. There is placed on the table for him a rice bowl and a pair of chopsticks. And so he dines with them again.

One day not long ago Eddie came to see me. "My father wants you to have this," he said. And he placed on my table a little carved teakwood statue of the God of Happiness. A grinning, merry little god with a fat tummy, his face all smiles, and holding his hands aloof in a sublime gesture of complete, carefree gaiety. There he stands whooping it up for joy and happiness.

And so, I know, does Mr. Wu, wherever he is—young again and strong—riding a friendly dragon and looking upon life to be enjoyed by oneself, one's sons, and one's friends.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

.....

THE Chinese read their books backwards. They start at what, to us, is the last page and then, reading from right to left, keep on to the final page, which is where our first would be. So making a concession to custom, these acknowledgments, which should in the American style come first, I now place last. But the book is finished, and now comes the time to say, "Thank you."

This book couldn't have been written without the help of my Chinese friends. So here's my thanks to all of them. Then there was Stanley Guest, who gave me some good advice now and then, too.

In collecting facts about juvenile delinquency in our Chinatowns throughout the country I am indebted to Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the United States Department of Justice; to Mr. Byrnes MacDonald, when he was Sixth Deputy Police Commissioner; and in his office at the Juvenile Aid Bureau of the Police Department of the City of New York, to Patrolwoman Hogan, Mrs. Mabel Fay, and Mr. Roy Babcock; to Police Commissioner Lewis J. Valentine of the City of New York; to Miss Elizabeth C. Tandy, in charge of the Juvenile Court Statistics of the United States Department of Labor; to Deputy Superintendent John M. Anderson, Bureau of Records of the Police Department of the City of

## SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

Boston; to Lieutenant Harry M. Costello, commanding the Crime Prevention Division of the Police Department of the City of Chicago; to Captain E. M. Slaughter, commanding Crime Prevention Division of the Department of Police of the City of Los Angeles; and to Miss Bertha H. Munn, assistant principal of Public School 23, New York City. Thanks to them all, even though they didn't have much to tell me, since crime in our Chinatowns is not a serious police problem.

For information concerning the Chinese on relief I am indebted to Miss Field of the Emergency Relief Bureau; to Mrs. Finkle and Mr. Pincus of the Home Relief Bureau; and to Mr. Walter G. Miller, Director of Public Information Section of the Works Progress Administration of the City of New York.

For permission to reprint some of my material previously published in magazines I am indebted to *This Week* for "Number One Bad Boy"; to *Collier's* for "Year of the Monkey"; and to *Ken* for "No Unions—No Strikes," copyright, 1939, by Esquire, Inc.

When I have quoted from the sayings of Confucius I have used what I consider the best translation, that made by Lin Yutang in his *The Wisdom of Confucius*, a Modern Library book. So thanks to the publishers, Random House, for permission to quote from this book. Also thanks to Mr. Archer Winsten of the *New York Post* for permission to quote from his "Wake of the News" column for November 21, 1935.

I am especially grateful to Mr. William Poole, first, for suggesting that I write this book, and second, for giving me much valuable editorial advice and assistance.

CARL GLICK.

## INDEX

- A**
- Ah-Pau (Grandmother), 62-80,  
208, 301
- American Red Cross, 244, 245
- "Apple of Everlasting Youth,"  
152-155
- Artisan, status of, 109
- B**
- Baby parades, 103
- Banquets, 28, 99, 136, 166, 172-  
174, 219, 226, 265, 318, 320
- Barbary Coast, 260
- Barton, James W., M.D., 91
- Bird's-nest soup, 171, 172
- Boston, 242, 283-286, 295
- Boxer Rebellion (1900), 289
- Buddhism, 215, 216
- Business, Chinese methods in,  
86-92
- C**
- Calendar, Chinese, 230-232
- California, Chinese in, 249, 287  
gold rush, 163, 201, 259, 260  
race riots, 5
- Cantonese, dialect of, 199, 200  
in revolution, 285
- Cantonese refugees, 287, 288
- Capitalism in industry, regula-  
tion of, 296
- Card games, 112-114
- Chinatowns in America, 7, 50,  
81-92, 287
- Chinese Athletic Club, 10-22,  
30, 302
- Chinese Benevolent Associa-  
tion, 224, 244, 245, 266
- Chinese cocktail bar, 184-193
- Chinese Digest*, 248
- Chinese Inter-Club Committee,  
308
- Chinese Laundry Alliance, 256
- Chinese Republic, 281-299  
three principles of, 296
- Chinese Revolution (1911), 281-  
299
- Chinese Theater, New York,  
292-294, 298
- Chop suey, 162-164
- Chopsticks, 28-30, 167, 169  
etiquette of, 168, 170
- Chow mein, 162
- Christianity, Chinese converts  
to, 210-218
- Chun hung* (challenge), 263-265

# SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

- Chung hong* (claim of location), 275  
 Church of All Nations, 9, 10, 302  
 Clans, family, 233-245, 260-266  
 Clubs, 308, 309  
 Cooks, 159-166  
 Confucianism, 212, 213, 216  
 Confucius (K'ung-Futse), 52, 53, 128, 160, 207  
     code of ethics, 52, 53, 128, 129, 134, 212, 216, 217  
     precepts of *San Tsung*, 65  
     quoted, 100, 106, 269, 310  
 Cooperative ownership in business, 248-258, 266  
 Curio stores, Chinese, 249

## D

- Democracy, 309-312  
 Dinners, Chinese, 165-175  
     prices of, 166  
 Divorce, rare among Chinese, 124, 125  
 Dobie, Charles, 162  
 Dragon, dancing by, 219-228, 244  
     for flood relief, 244, 245  
     meaning of, 226-228  
 Duck, 2, 157, 158, 166

## E

- Elders in Chinese community, 142-156  
 Emergency Work Bureau, 9

Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi, 282, 289, 297

Exclusion laws (1882), 5

## F

- Farmer, status of, 109  
 Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2, 178, 179  
 Federal Theater, 243, 244  
 Filial piety, 52-59, 106  
 Freemasons, Chinese (Gee Kung Tong), 292  
 Fuh-Hi, first Emperor of China, 127-129, 232  
 Funerals, 280, 315-320

## G

- Games, Chinese, 111-114  
 "Golden Mountain" (America), 201  
 Gordon, Charles George ("Chinese"), 287  
 Grandmother, rule by, 62-80  
 Guilds, family, 233-245  
 Gunmen, 263-267

## H

- Haircut, baby's first, 93-100  
 Hatchetmen, 8, 263-267  
*Hing dai* (cousins), 57, 237, 250, 279  
 Hip Sing Tong, 261, 262  
 Home relief, 234, 242-244  
 Honesty, Chinese, 114, 115

# INDEX

Howe, Ben, 45  
Hsiung, Dr. S. I., 197-199  
Hu Shih, Ambassador, 200

## I

Inter-Racial Conference, 45  
I.Q. of Chinese children, 110

## J

Jade, qualities of, 85, 86, 155, 156  
Jesus, 206, 207, 210, 213, 214  
Juvenile Aid Bureau, 50  
Juvenile delinquency, rare among Chinese, 45-59, 115

## K

Kites, 112  
*Kuai tzu* (see Chopsticks)  
K'ung-Futse (see Confucius)  
*Kung Saw* (family clan), 233-245, 260-266, 279, 280, 312, 317  
Kwong Dock Tong, 260  
*Kwot-how*, baby's first haircut, 93-100

## L

Land ownership, equalization of, 296  
Lao-Tse, 216  
Laundries, 230-245, 249, 256-258, 268-281, 288

Laundries (Cont.)  
    Revolution of 1911 financed by, 281-285, 297  
Li Hung-Chang, late Premier of China, 164  
Los Angeles, 50

## M

Magazines, Chinese, 308  
Manchus, overthrow of, 281-299  
Mandarin, universal spoken language, 199, 200  
Marco Polo, 169, 170  
Marriage, 120-141  
Matchmakers, 120-141  
Merchants, 84-90  
    methods of, 89-92  
    status of, 109  
Ming Dynasty, 286  
Mississippi River, floods, 244, 245  
Mock Wah, 260  
Monkey, Year of, 230-245  
*Mui Kwe Lu*, 176-178

## N

Names, Chinese, 93-100  
Nanking Government, 245  
Nationality, principle of, 296  
New Year, Chinese, 219-226, 272, 273  
New York, Chinese population, 50, 82, 127, 242, 262, 264, 292, 308  
*New York Post*, 186



# SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DRAGON

*New York Times*, 178  
 Noonan, Tom, Rescue Mission,  
 294

## O

On Leong Tong, 261, 262

## P

Philadelphia, 242, 243  
 Pigtales, 284, 286, 290, 293  
*Po-dai* (priority protection), 275,  
 276  
 Poetry, Chinese, 200-205  
 "Prodigal son" story, 53-55,  
 111  
 Public schools, 93-95, 110, 305

## R

Relief (*see* Home relief)  
 Relief for China Associations,  
 224  
 Republic, Chinese, 281-299  
 Restaurant Association, 256  
 Restaurants, Chinese, 249, 250,  
 265, 297  
 Revolution (1911), 281-299  
 Rice, 160, 167-169, 173, 236  
 Rights of the people, principle  
 of, 296

## S

San Francisco, 7, 163, 243, 248,  
 254, 292, 308

Sauces, 158, 163, 164, 169  
 Scholar, rank of, in China, 109-  
 111  
 Scholarship, 145-147, 151  
 Schools, Chinese, 111  
 "Seal of Life" symbol, 127-130,  
 232  
 Seaweed, 159, 163, 278  
 Secret societies, 34-44  
     for overthrow of Manchus,  
     286, 289  
 Selective Service Act, 311  
*Shew yeh* (midnight supper), 2,  
 241, 277  
 Slang, American, 214, 215  
 Social security, Chinese solu-  
 tion, 229-245  
 Soldier, status of, 109  
 Soy-bean sauce, 158, 169  
 Spotted Lizard wine, 182  
 Strike, only Chinese, 248, 254  
 Sue Shang-Hong, 282, 283, 291-  
 298  
*Sun Nin Toy* (New Year), 219-  
 226  
 Sun Yat-Sen, President, 282-299  
     three principles, 296, 298

## T

Taiping Rebellion, 287, 289  
 Tangerines, 272  
 Taoism, 216, 226, 227  
 Tea, 3, 89, 90, 138, 276, 277  
 Three Principles of Chinese  
 Republic, 296

# INDEX

Tiger Bone wine, 182

Tongs, 8, 223, 258-267, 309

Tsai Ting-Kai, General, 63, 79,  
203

Tzu Hsi, Empress Dowager,  
282, 289, 297

## U

Union Pacific Railroad, 288

## V

Vigilance committees, 260, 261,  
265

## W

Wang Wei, poems of, 145

Wedding ceremonies, 132-138

Wen, Emperor, *Book of  
Changes*, 128

Wines, Chinese, 176-193

Winsten, Archer, 186

Works Progress Administration,  
9, 234

## Y

Yang and Yin principle, 127-  
130, 232, 316

Yi principle, 226, 227











